

Flu levels drop, but enteroviruses on rise: Health Bureau

Yuki Lei

The Health Bureau (SSM) held a press conference yesterday to raise public awareness of common springtime infectious diseases, during which Chang Tam Fei, director of the emergency department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre, quoted the latest surveillance data as saying that influenza viral activity in Macau has dropped slightly from its peak over the past week, but enteroviruses have been on the rise lately, and are even expected to increase further in the spring.

Macau entered its influenza peak season in December last year, predominantly driven by the Influenza A virus. In the first week of this year, there was a significant increase in the number of attendances at the emergency clinics of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre and private Kiang Wu Hospital, with nearly 1,400 attendances – children accounted for 300 attendances, according to the press conference. It outlined the trends in Macau's influenza virus positivity*, indicating that it peaked at 29.1 percent in the fourth week of the year and then decreased to



Chang Tam Fei (centre), director of the emergency department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre; leong Chon Kit (right), an official from the Health Bureau's Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Division; and Wong Fong Ian, chief of the Paediatrics Department at Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre, pose during yesterday's press conference about common springtime infectious diseases. – Photo: Yuki Lei

13.4 percent over the past week, a drop of 31.0 percent from the previous week's positivity rate of 19.4 percent.

Yesterday's press conference was also addressed by leong Chon Kit, an official from the Health Bureau's Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Division; as well as Wong Fong Ian, chief of the

Paediatrics Department at Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre.

Regarding influenza-like illness clusters, the press conference noted that the bureau has so far recorded 29 cases this year, involving 206 individuals, primarily in primary and secondary schools, of which 17 cases were reportedly caused by Influenza A viruses.

Dr Chang referenced health surveillance data indicating a slight decrease in influenza activity in Macau following the Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday. However, he was quick to underline that influenza was still expected to remain in the community this month.

According to the bureau, the average daily number of attendances

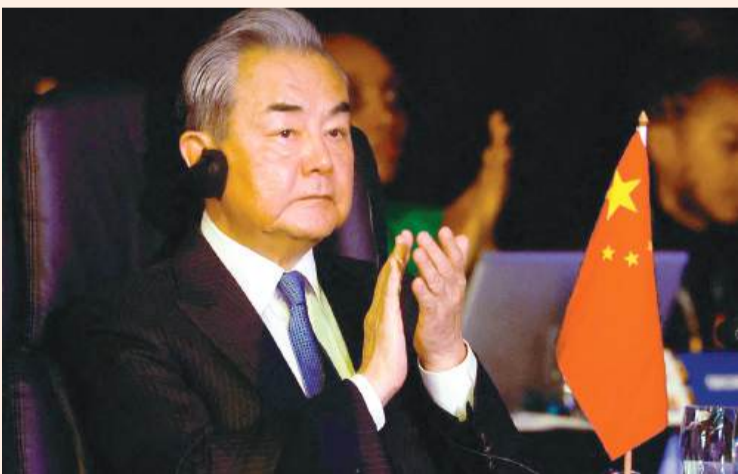


at the two hospitals for influenza-related emergencies over the past week stood at 82, consisting of about 44 adults and 38 children each day.

Dr Chang also said that the influenza vaccination campaign in Macau was "very active", with a peak of more than 3,000 vaccinations per day in January: "...the number of inoculations has recently decreased slightly, but the daily average has been around 1,000 for some time". He added that government-purchased vaccines were effective in preventing the epidemic strain of H1N1.

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Chinese, Russian FMs meet on bilateral ties



Foreign Minister Wang Yi applauds as South African President Cyril Ramaphosa delivers the keynote address at the welcome ceremony during the G20 Foreign Minister Meeting at the Nasrec Expo Centre in Johannesburg yesterday. – AFP

JOHANNESBURG – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi discussed China-Russia relations with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov yesterday on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said that the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era is advancing to a higher level and broader dimensions.

The two sides have maintained steady progress in mutually beneficial cooperation and engaged in close and effective strategic

coordination, playing a crucial role in safeguarding the common interests of both countries and their peoples while advancing the process of global multipolarity, Wang said.

China is willing to work with Russia to fully implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state and to further advance China-Russia relations in the new year, he added.

Lavrov, for his part, said that Russia is willing to work with China to strengthen high-level exchanges, deepen practical cooperation in economy, trade, finance, culture, and other fields, and promote the further development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

Noting that Russia and China both uphold multipolarity and serve as stabilizing forces in a complex and turbulent world, he said that Russia highly recognizes the global initiatives put forward by China, values the high level of mutual trust between the two countries, and is willing to continue to strengthen communication and coordination with China under the BRICS mechanism, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the United Nations, the G20, and other frameworks.

The two sides also exchanged views and coordinated positions on international and regional issues of mutual concern, including the situation in the Middle East. – (More on p.10) – Xinhua

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200 fraud suspects repatriated from Myanmar to China

A group of 200 Chinese citizens suspected of involvement in fraud returned to China under the escort of Chinese police yesterday after being repatriated from Myawaddy in Myanmar. – Story on p. 7

Russia says retook 64 pct of area seized by Ukraine in Kursk

Russia has recaptured 64 percent of the territory captured by Ukraine in the Kursk border region since Kyiv's offensive there last summer, a senior Russian military leader said yesterday. – Story on p. 11

Guinea-Bissau arrests lawmaker for 'coup sacrifice ritual'

Guinea-Bissau's police have arrested an opposition lawmaker during a "mystic ceremony" involving "sacrifices" intended to increase a coup d'état's chance of success, a security source told AFP on Wednesday. – Story on p. 12

Flu levels drop, but enteroviruses on rise: Health Bureau

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Influenza has declined slightly since its peak and the number of attendances at emergency clinics has been on a steady downward trend, but, according to Dr Chang, it has risen slightly in the last week, pointing out: "Our [current] attendance figures should resemble those prior to the Chinese New Year holidays".

Enteroviruses** on the rise

Dr Leong said that with the gradual rise in temperature in spring, "all kinds of gastrointestinal discomforts are on the rise", citing health surveillance figures as pointing out that there has been an increase in gastroenteritis cases since December last year, mainly due to food poisoning caused by improper food processing and storage, as well as gastrointestinal

infections, with the most common viruses being norovirus and rotavirus – the former, according to Dr Leong, is highly contagious, but its symptoms are typically mild, including gastrointestinal discomfort, coughing, vomiting, stomach ache and mild fever that can be gradually recovered from within one to five days.

According to the press conference, so far this year, the bureau has received 15 reports of mass gastroenteritis, affecting about 178 people, including food-borne gastroenteritis, as well as outbreaks in educational institutions and social welfare facilities, where viral gastroenteritis is more prevalent but generally present with milder symptoms.

Dr Leong also cited the bureau's information on mandatory reporting of diseases, saying that there hasn't

been any significant increase in cases of norovirus, rotavirus, salmonella or bacterial food poisoning, among which, specifically, the average number of norovirus cases stood at 10 per week, lower than the 14 cases per week reported during the same period last year; while the average number of rotavirus cases and salmonella cases remained stable at three per week and one per week respectively, both consistent with the previous year.

On childhood infections, Dr Wong said that between January and last Saturday, the central laboratory detected 82 samples of gastrointestinal viruses, among which about 37 were norovirus, a relatively high in number, while 22 were rotavirus.

The press conference highlighted residents' need to take preventive

measures against infectious diseases in spring, including maintaining a balanced diet, increasing the intake of fruit and vegetables, and exercising regularly to strengthen immunity; in terms of personal hygiene, washing hands frequently, especially before meals and after going to the toilet, and covering mouth and nose with one's elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing to avoid direct contact; in terms of environmental hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting one's living environment on a regular basis and keeping it well ventilated with special attention to hygiene in the kitchen and dining area by keeping food storage safe.

Dr Chang pointed out that the overall distribution of cases in spring was slightly different between adults and children, with

adults being more tolerant than children, so parents should pay close attention to their kids' health conditions and any symptoms they may exhibit. ■

*Influenza virus positivity refers to the proportion of laboratory tests that confirm the presence of the influenza virus in samples taken from individuals suspected of having an influenza-like illness (ILI). This metric is commonly used to monitor influenza activity during flu seasons and is expressed as a percentage. – DeepSeek

**Enteroviruses are small, non-enveloped, and highly contagious. They are known to cause a wide range of illnesses in humans, ranging from mild respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms to severe neurological and systemic diseases. – DeepSeek

5 family members caught reselling Mark Six tickets: police

William Chan

Three mainlanders and two locals, who are family members, have been arrested for reselling Mark Six lottery tickets, Public Security Police (PSP) spokeswoman Lai In Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Lai, the police were recently tipped off about sales occurring at a grocery shop in the Area Preta district, and on Tuesday, police officers who arrived at the scene discovered a mainland man surnamed Wang selling Mark Six tickets to a customer.

Police intercepted Wang and discovered that Wang did not hold a Macau work permit, and the shop was owned by his brother and sister-in-law, who are local residents.

Under questioning, Wang said

that he was temporarily replacing his wife and brother-in-law, both of whom are non-resident workers at the shop.

The five suspects are in their thirties and forties.

When searching the shop, the police seized a total of 23 Mark Six lottery tickets.

Wang, the shop owner, told the police that he had been selling Mark Six lottery tickets since last year. In his latest restock this month, he purchased tickets worth 1,800 patacas and resold them for 50 patacas each.

The case involves "illegally selling lottery tickets," and the quintet have been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further questioning. The shop owners also face charges of illegal employment, according to Lai. ■



This undated photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows the Mark Six quintet being escorted to a police station in the northern district.

Govt mulls improving consumer rewards scheme if relaunched

Ginnie Liang

Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip said yesterday that the government is considering making improvements to any future consumer reward schemes, such as simplifying the process for elderly residents to use digital coupons, provided that the "Citywide Consumer Rewards" promotional activity will be relaunched.

Tai made the remarks during a Legislative Assembly plenary session in response to an oral enquiry by lawmaker Ip Sio Kai, who asked whether the government would continue its consumer rewards initiatives.

Tai added that, for instance, the government was considering that seniors could use their Macau Pass cards to top up and spend rewards, eliminating the need for additional tools or cards.

Organised by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) in collaboration with local business associations, the government's previous "Citywide Consumer Rewards" promotional activity, launched on September 30 last year, ran for 13 weeks and ended on December 29,

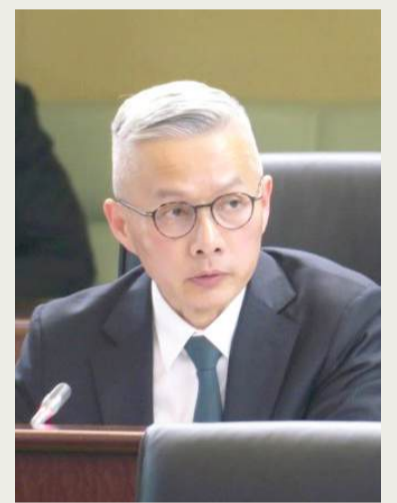
aimed at boosting spending across Macau's different neighbourhoods by offering e-coupons, merchant discounts, and lucky draws.

Tai pointed out that the campaign successfully drove significant economic activity, with e-coupons alone generating a total spending of about 227 million patacas and stimulating over 1.1 billion patacas in citywide consumption.

Tai emphasised that the government remains committed to supporting local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community economic development through various measures, such as financial aid programmes, youth entrepreneurship initiatives, and digital transformation support services.

Tai also highlighted the success of last year's weekend consumer rewards events in the northern district and the citywide campaign, which helped attract customers to local businesses.

Building on these experiences, the government is exploring ways to enhance any future promotions, including refining coupon redemption methods and ensuring greater accessibility for all



Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle.

– Photo courtesy of TDM

residents, particularly the elderly.

While Lei did not confirm the launch of a new campaign, he assured that the government would announce more comprehensive details on its short-term measures to boost community consumption in different neighbourhoods soon, aiming to further invigorate Macau's community economy and provide sustained support to SMEs amid evolving consumption patterns. ■

Mainlander loses 2 million yuan in 'fake police' scam: police

William Chan

A man from the mainland has lost 2 million yuan (2.2 million patacas) in a "fake police" scam, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Sio Keong said in a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Cheong, the victim, who is under the age of 30, received a call while in Macau in mid-January from a man claiming to be a "Hunan police officer." The fraudster alleged that the victim had sent out a "significant number of

scam messages", which purportedly had led to one of the victims committing suicide.

The victim believed the "police officer" and transferred a total of 2 million yuan in several transactions to a Hong Kong bank account as per the scammer's demand.

Cheong noted that the victim only realised that he had been scammed after talking to his family about the case and finally decided to report the matter to the police. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Sio Keong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

– Photo: William Chan

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RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



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Source: SMG

MGTO unveils destination marketing in HK

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) hosted a Spring luncheon in Hong Kong last Friday, Macau's second largest visitor market, to thank members of its travel trade, with an MGTO statement on Wednesday noting that it will progressively launch promotions to secure more visitations.

During her speech at the luncheon, which was joined by over 100 Hong Kong tourism industry representatives, MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said that Macau welcomed nearly 35 million visitors last year, including over 7.10 million, i.e., some 20 percent of the total, from Hong Kong, which continues to rank second among the top ten visitor markets, after the Chinese mainland. Senna Fernandes added that she hopes MGTO will build closer

cooperation with Hong Kong's tourism authorities and industry operators in different aspects.

The statement said that initiatives on online platforms, social media, along with other online and offline measures, are among the promotions to be continuously launched.

Moreover, the statement noted that new attractions will be explored, based on the needs of different market segments in Hong Kong, while MGTO's representatives there will "strengthen communication and collaboration with the travel trade" and regularly organise activities such as product presentations and themed fact-finding visits, among others.

Moreover, the statement said that MGTO will host the "Experience Macao" Mega Sale during the current Holiday & Travel Expo 2025 in Hong Kong, which will run through Sunday. ■



This handout photo provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Wednesday shows MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes delivering a speech in Hong Kong during a Spring luncheon hosted by MGTO for the neighbouring special administrative region's travel sector.

Visitors rise 27.4 pct to 3.6 million in January

Staff Reporter

Macau recorded 3.64 million visitor arrivals last month, a year-on-year growth of 27.4 percent, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced yesterday.

Same-day visitors (2.15 million) and overnight visitors (1.49 million) rose by 45.6 percent and 7.9 percent year on year respectively. Overnight visitors stayed for an average of 2.2 days, unchanged from a year earlier.

The Chinese New Year (Spring Festival) holiday fell on the last

week of January this year.

Visitors from mainland China rose by 33.8 percent to 2.75 million last month, or 75.4 percent of the total. Visitors from Hong Kong (577,983, or 15.8 percent of the total) and China's Taiwan region (77,163) rose by 5.8 percent and 28.8 percent respectively.

Foreign visitors rose by 21 percent to 241,131, or 6.6 percent of the total number of visitor arrivals in January, mostly from South Korea (65,659) and the Philippines (48,499). ■



Visitors walk near the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's earlier this month. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

Macau's residential property prices set to continue 'adjusting': JLL

Yuki Lei

Commercial real estate services company JLL (Jones Lang LaSalle) has forecast that Macau's residential property market will remain challenging this year due to a weak external economy, with prices being expected to continue "adjusting", urging the government to "consider reasonably increasing [the loan-to-value] ratio, accounting for buyers' affordability, to prevent further economic and property market deterioration", as outlined in its "Macau Property Market Review and 2025 Market Forecast".

The report, released on Wednesday, highlights a steady rise in the local residential property rental market, citing its Macau Property Index as pointing out that last year's rental values for luxury flats increased by 2.5 percent year on year, while rental values for mass residential flats surged by 13.7 percent. In contrast, the asset prices for both high-end and small- to medium-sized residential properties decreased, dropping by 11.4 percent and 9.7 percent year on year, respectively.

Citing figures from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF), the report also noted that "the number of new home sales remained at a low level", with a transaction volume of 3,057 in the local residential market and pre-sale transactions recorded last year. It added that while new home sales increased in the second half of the year due to the launch of



This file photo taken last year gives a bird's eye view of part of the city centre.

— Photo: Yuki Lei

new projects, "this trend was not sustained".

The report quoted Mark Wong Choi Si, director of Value and Risk Advisory at JLL in Macau, as saying that Macau's home prices have generally fallen by more than 20 percent from the market peak, with some flats falling by as much as 30 percent, but pointing out that the market has not seen strong demand in the face of a weak investment climate and an abundant supply of flats available on the housing ladder. He also said that as the price gap between some second-hand private residential flats and the prices of the government's subsidised home-ownership scheme (HOS) flats offered for sale has narrowed in recent years, the demand for

the government's HOS units has decreased accordingly: "With private housing prices having dropped, they have become more attractive, affecting the demand for economical [subsidised HOS] housing".

The real estate agency forecast that small- and medium-sized residential asset prices, as well as premium residential asset prices, will continue to decline by 0-5 percent this year, with their rental values being adjusted upwards.

Meanwhile, in terms of the retail property market, the report quoted the agency as noting that it "will likely maintain a polarised trend, with leasing activities remaining active for prime shops in tourist areas, while neighbourhood shops continue to face pressure". ■

Air Macau, MGM announce partnership on business class menu



This photo shows some of the dishes to be on offer for Air Macau's in-flight dining experience.



MGM MACAU Executive Chef of Chinese Cuisine Homan Tsui (right) and MGM MACAU Executive Chef Gianluca Visani pose after yesterday's press conference at the integrated resort in Nape.

Rui Pastorin

Air Macau and integrated resort operator MGM announced during a press conference at MGM MACAU in Nape yesterday a new partnership for in-flight dining experiences for the airline's business class passengers flying to over 10 destinations.

Set to launch on March 1, the accumulative menu comprises 36 new Eastern and Western dishes, according to yesterday's press conference, with MGM's professional culinary team from Imperial Court, and Aux Beaux Arts having provided technical guidance on menu design, recipe development and culinary training for nearly a year.

Aux Beaux Arts is a French brasserie, while Imperial Court, which MGM MACAU's website notes as

having garnered the One-Diamond Restaurant award in the Black Pearl Restaurant Guide for three consecutive years, features Lingnan cuisine.

A session on the insights and experiences behind the collaboration by MGM MACAU Executive Chef of Chinese Cuisine Homan Tsui (徐偉豪) and MGM MACAU Executive Chef Gianluca Visani was also held at the press conference.

Visani told the *Post* after the session that among the items chosen for the menu are iconic long-time dishes and famous French food, wanting to "show the uniqueness of our food to the business class of Air Macau".

The chef added that when designing the menu and some of its items, the ingredients and the

"French touch" were also kept in mind. He added that the idea for them was to put, on a plate, three ingredients that can combine and match each other and keep a very traditional French way of cooking.

Meanwhile, MGM China Holdings Limited President & Chief Operating Officer Hubert Wang Zhiqi yesterday remarked on the partnership in a speech, noting that through Air Macau's "extensive route network, we can showcase our city's rich gastronomic culture, allowing travellers to experience Macau's culinary excellence even in the sky."

He added: "This initiative strengthens Macau's position as a 'Creative City of Gastronomy', while advancing the city's status as a 'World Centre of Tourism and Leisure'. ■



‘Macau In My Heart’ — a photo journey by local artist Chao Io Chong

Kristina Vallesteros

Local artist and professional photographer Alex Chao Io Chong (仇耀中) kicked off his photography exhibition “Macau In My Heart” at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) earlier this week.

The exhibition opened on February 18 and will be on display until next Saturday, with Chao saying in a speech at Tuesday’s opening ceremony he was hoping to use it as “an invitation for people to get to know and fall in love with Macau”.

In the exhibition, Chao tells the story of “Macau In My Heart” through 30 photos, capturing, according to his speech, the “most authentic” sides of the city, as well as his “deep affection” for Macau. Chao further described his approach during his speech: “I used my lens, as a poet uses his pen, to transform such profound emotions into a visual language.”

Chao’s work shows significant events in Macau’s transformation from a fishing village to a prosperous international city. According to a statement on the FRC website, the gallery displays “the impressiveness of Macau’s modern constructions in recent years, exquisite cultural landscapes and warmth of urban life.”

Exhibitiongoers will find three sections: “Charming Macau”, “East meets West”, and “Traits of Macau”, which the FRC website notes will take visitors through the different facets that make up the city.

The gallery statement said that Chao graduated from the Macao Polytechnic Institute (IPM), now known as the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), with a major in Visual Arts. The statement noted that his extensive experience spans various fields, including visual design, book publishing, multimedia and exhibition planning.

Those interested can visit the free-admission exhibition from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. from Monday to Friday, as well as from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday.



Local lensman Alex Chao Io Chong delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of his “Macau in My Heart” exhibition at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) gallery earlier this week. – Photos taken earlier this week by Rui Pastorin.



Govt to study HOS flat swap system: Tam

Tony Wong

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man said yesterday that the government will study the feasibility of allowing households living in subsidised home-ownership scheme (HOS) flats to apply to move to other HOS units with different bedroom numbers.

Tam said that the proposed measure aims to enable HOS households with their family size having increased to move to flats with more bedrooms.

The future possible implementation of the proposal revealed by Tam yesterday would require amendments to the HOS law.

Amendments to laws proposed by the government must be passed by the legislature to take effect.

Tam made the remarks when replying to oral interpellations by lawmakers during a plenary session in the legislature's hemicycle. Yesterday was the first time that Tam in his capacity as a policy secretary attended a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL). Tam had headed the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) since March 2016 before taking office as the secretary for transport and public works on December 20 last year.

HOS flats are part of the government's public housing programme which also includes social rental housing and sandwich-class housing. In Portuguese and Chinese, they are known as "economical", i.e., "affordable" flats.

Social housing units are provided for low-income local families to rent, while government-built HOS flats are sold below private property market prices to local residents who are unable to buy a flat in the private sector.

The government's newly established sandwich-class housing programme aims to provide "affordable" flats for local residents who are not eligible to buy an HOS flat but cannot afford to buy a flat in the private sector either.

Sandwich-class flats are sold at higher prices than HOS flats.

Currently, HOS estates provide flats with one, two or three bedrooms.

According to the HOS law's current version, a one-person household can only apply to buy an HOS flat with one bedroom, while a two-member household can choose to buy a flat with one or two bedrooms. A household with three or more members can choose to buy an HOS

flat with one, two or three bedrooms.

Some civic leaders have said that such provisions listed in the current HOS law would discourage those living in a one-bedroom HOS flat from having children. Similarly, civic leaders have said, individuals who plan to marry and have children in the future may choose not to apply to buy an HOS flat at the moment because they can only apply for a one-bedroom flat, which, however, would not be able to meet their needs in the future when they have children.

Consequently, civic leaders have said, such provisions would discourage young local people from starting a family.

In her oral interpellations presented during yesterday's plenary session, lawmaker Ella Lei Cheng I asked the government whether it will propose amendments to the current HOS law allowing individuals to apply to buy a two-bedroom HOS flat.

Lei also asked whether the government will propose HOS amendments allowing eligible residents to file an application to buy an HOS flat any time, i.e., its application process will be carried out on a permanent basis.

According to the current HOS system, after all the available flats

in a particular round of applications have been allocated, all other unsuccessful applicants on the list will be removed so that they will have to reapply the next time a new application round is launched.

In his oral interpellations presented during yesterday's plenary session, legislator Zheng Anting asked the government whether it will propose amendments to the current HOS law allowing those living in a one-bedroom HOS flat to move to a two-bedroom one, and those living in a two-bedroom HOS flat to move to a three-bedroom one, by paying the government the respective price differences.

Tam replied that in the near future the government will not consider the possibility of proposing amendments changing the government's current HOS application process to a new one to be carried out on a permanent basis, after assessing the city's current socioeconomic situation.

However, Tam was quick to add that the government will launch a study on the feasibility of allowing existing HOS households to apply to move to other HOS units with different bedroom numbers.

Moreover, Tam also pledged that the government will study the



Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle.

— Photo courtesy of TDM

possibility of improving the criteria listed in the current points-based system for the allocation of HOS flats after an application round is launched, with the aim of enabling more residents with different levels of incomes to become eligible to buy an HOS flat.

All proposals laid out by Tam would require amendments to the HOS law. ■

LRT's extension to Qingmao checkpoint feasible: Tam

Tony Wong

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man said yesterday that the government has preliminarily concluded that it would be feasible to launch a project to extend the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) East Line to the Qingmao pedestrian border checkpoint.

Tam also reaffirmed that the execution of the extended LRT East Line project could be expected to be difficult because of the complexity of the respective area's geological conditions.

Tam made the remarks when replying to oral interpellations by lawmakers during yesterday's plenary session in the legislature's hemicycle.

The ongoing LRT East Line project, which got off the ground in 2023, is a 7.7-kilometre-long section connecting the Barrier Gate checkpoint at the peninsula's northern tip and the Taipa Ferry Terminal via the Zone A and Zone E1 land reclamation areas. The East Line will cross the sea between Zone A and Zone E1 through an undersea tunnel.

The ongoing LRT East Line project, without the projected extension to the Qingmao checkpoint, is scheduled to be



This handout photo downloaded from the Public Works Bureau's (DSOP) website yesterday shows the ongoing LRT East Line project next to the Barrier Gate checkpoint in December last year.

completed in 2028, which the government is aiming to open in 2029.

During yesterday's plenary session, Tam noted that last year's transfer of jurisdiction of a V-shaped area, located southeast of Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint, from Zhuhai City to Macau has statutorily enabled Macau to extend the LRT East Line to the Qingmao checkpoint.

After the transfer, the local government launched a study last year on the feasibility of launching a project to extend the LRT East Line to the Qingmao checkpoint.

Tam said yesterday that after the study, the government has

preliminarily concluded that the extended project would be feasible.

Tam underlined that as the feasibility study is still ongoing, for the time being the government will not come up with an estimated budget and construction period for the extended project.

Tam noted that the future extended LRT East Line section will also be an underground one running beneath the Barrier Gate checkpoint and its adjacent Dr Sun Yat-sen Municipal Park before arriving at the Qingmao checkpoint, adding that the extended project could be expected to be difficult because of the complexity of the respective area's geological conditions. ■

Govt mulls exploring low-altitude economy to align with '1+4' economic diversification: Tai

Ginnie Liang

Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip said yesterday that the government plans to optimise policies and introduce measures tailored to the development of low-altitude economies*, in order to align with Macau's "1+4" model** aiming to appropriately diversify Macau's economy.

Tai made the remarks in response to an oral interpellation during a plenary session yesterday in the legislature's hemicycle, in which lawmaker José Choi San Peng urged the government to respond to national calls to develop Macau's low-altitude economy.

Tai noted that the low-altitude economy is an economic activity reliant on low-altitude airspace, primarily driven by the general aviation industry, which encompasses sectors such as low-altitude transportation, tourism, research, education, and entertainment, utilising aircraft like drones and helicopters.

To support the initiative, Lei noted that Macau is actively participating in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Standardisation Innovation Alliance, with a local university leading the alliance's low-altitude economy working group, focusing on technical standards, experimental scenarios, and commercial applications.

During yesterday's plenary session, Macau Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) Vice President Fong Wai Long said that Macau's current low-altitude economic activities are primarily centred on cross-border helicopter services, connecting Macau with Hong Kong and Shenzhen, as well as offering sightseeing tours.

Fong said that drones are increasingly popular for commercial, recreational, and emergency purposes, and are also being utilised by the local government for tasks such as surveillance, mapping, and infrastructure inspections.

However, Fong acknowledged the challenges posed by Macau's limited airspace, dense population, and high-rise buildings, adding that the government can start with small-scale drone applications and gradually expand to larger operations, including cargo and potentially passenger transport, while the government is also monitoring international regulations to inform future legal adjustments.

*According to Wikipedia, the term low-altitude economy (LAE) refers to economic activities in airspace up to 1,000 metres above the ground, although the airspace may be extended to up to 3,000 metres depending on regional and practical needs. This includes various activities and industries related to civil manned and unmanned aircraft, such as passenger transport (including electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft), cargo transport (including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)), manufacturing and integrated services.

** Appropriately diversified development refers to the framework of the government's "1+4" appropriate economic diversification model, which aims to consolidate and diversify the development of the city's tourism and leisure industry while putting special emphasis on promoting the development of four diversified industries, namely 1) big health, 2) modern finance, 3) high-tech, and 4) MICE as well as culture and sports. ■

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 1.6 pct lower

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index

down 1.6 percent to close at 22,576.98 points. The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index fell 1.66 percent to end at

8,322.56 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index fell 3.04 percent to end at 5,500.02 points.

—Xinhua