

2-year-old girl injured in Taichung's gas blast returns to Macau

Yuki Lei

A 2-year-old local girl surnamed Tang sustained a serious head injury in a gas explosion at Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store in Taichung earlier this month – and Taiwan's semi-official Central News Agency (CNA) yesterday afternoon quoted that city's China Medical University Hospital representative as saying that the girl would be transferred to Macau by a medical charter flight, while public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre officials said yesterday evening that the girl remained in coma and was currently in the hospital's intensive care unit (ICU).

On February 13, a gas explosion occurred at the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store in central Taiwan's Taichung city, hitting seven members of a four-generation local family with falling objects in front of the building, resulting in two fatalities and five injuries. The girl's grandfather – a retired Public Security Police (PSP) officer – was killed at the accident scene, while her grandmother, who worked at the Fortuna casino-hotel, was rushed to the hospital but died in the emergency room. The 2-year-old girl was first taken to Taichung's Cheng Ching Hospital and then to China Medical University Hospital, accompanied by her parents.

The CNA report quoted the representative as noting that the girl's vital signs – body temperature, pulse rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure – stabilised after several days of treatment, with her brain pressure lower



The 2-year-old girl is transferred by ambulance from a medical charter flight to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre yesterday afternoon. – Photo courtesy of TDM

than at the time of her admission to hospital. However, according to the representative, the girl "remained in the danger zone"* yesterday.

The CNA media report noted that in co-ordination with the family, the girl left the hospital yesterday afternoon to be transferred to Macau by a medical charter flight, together with her 85-year-old great-grandmother and 24-year-old uncle.

According to Taiwan media reports, due to severe head trauma, the girl underwent emergency cranial decompression surgery after being transferred to China Medical University Hospital.

As reported, the family held a funeral

ceremony and cremation for the grandparents last Thursday. Their ashes were reportedly carried by family members on the flight back to Macau yesterday.

Taiwan media reported that the cost of the medical charter flight was fully covered by Shin Kong Mitsukoshi, quoting a representative as saying that the company would also take responsibility for the girl's subsequent medical-related expenses in Macau.

Public hospital 'fully commits' to treatment

According to public broadcaster TDM, the girl arrived at the hospital at about 4 p.m.

yesterday and was taken to its ICU by the medical team. The hospital's Chief Paediatrician Wong Fong Ian was quoted as saying that the girl had suffered serious brain damage, requiring a ventilator to keep her breathing and heart beating.

Dr Wong also said reportedly that with the help of blood pressure medication, the girl's blood pressure has stabilised, adding that her department will arrange for imaging examination and consult with the Neurosurgery Department to follow up on the treatment plan.

Dr Wong emphasised that the hospital has relevant experience in treating brain injuries, which, however, may take a long time to recover, assuring that the hospital will try its best to look after the girl and give her active treatment, remaining fully committing to her treatment.

Chang Tam Fei, director of the hospital's emergency department, said that the Health Bureau has liaised with various public entities since the accident to understand the girl's condition, and has also updated itself about the girl's injuries and current status through a preliminary report.

He noted that after receiving the family's wish last week to transfer the girl to Macau for treatment, medical representatives from both Macau and Taiwan hospitals convened to assess her condition before facilitating her return to Macau for further treatment. ■

*The phrase "remain in the danger zone" typically refers to a situation where someone continues to be in a risky, hazardous, or critical state. – DeepSeek

Man, 61, 'burnt to a crisp' in 'suspicious' fire: Fire Services Bureau

Yuki Lei

A 61-year-old local man perished in a fire yesterday in a flat in Block 4 of Lok Kuan Building in Seac Pai Van – and the Fire Services Bureau (CB) said that "the local man was burnt to a crisp in the flat", adding that the Judiciary Police were immediately notified about the incident for further investigation into the "suspicious" case.

According to the Fire Services Bureau, the incident occurred at about 7 p.m. yesterday. Upon arrival at the scene, firefighters saw an inferno on the sixth floor of the flat in the social rental housing estate. The fire was

extinguished using an open hose.

About 20 dwellers self-evacuated from the scene.

The Fire Services Bureau noted that, according to a preliminary investigation, the man's body was found with his hands and legs bound. The metal gate of his flat was believed by the firefighters to have been blocked by a TV cabinet when they broke into the flat.

In a statement late last night, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) identified the victim as a member of a family receiving support from a social welfare organisation subsidised by the bureau.

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Judiciary Police (PJ) and fire engines are seen during last night's deadly fire at a flat in Block 4 of Lok Kuan Building in Seac Pai Van, Coloane. – Photo: William Chan

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The Macau Post Daily

Mainland's first wholly foreign-owned tertiary general hospital opens in Tianjin

Mainland China's first wholly foreign-owned tertiary general hospital opened yesterday in Tianjin Municipality, marking the latest development following China's expanded opening-up policy in the healthcare sector. – Story on p. 7

Bezos announces restrictions on Washington Post opinion coverage

WASHINGTON – The Washington Post will no longer run views opposed to "personal liberties and free markets" on its opinion pages, its owner Jeff Bezos announced yesterday. – Story on p. 11

Brazil hosts 1st BRICS Sherpas meeting as bloc president

Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister Mauro Vieira on Tuesday opened the first meeting of BRICS Sherpas, or chief negotiators, with Brazil holding the rotating presidency of the bloc, the Foreign Ministry confirmed. – Story on p. 12

DSAL probes 21 cases involving underage employment in 2022-24

Yuki Lei

Macau's Employment Act stipulates that employees must be aged at least 16 when entering into a labour contract – but the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) says that between 2022 and 2024 it investigated 21 cases involving underage employment, primarily concerning employers breaching the employment conditions for minors and failing to comply with the government's official notification obligation.

The bureau made the remarks in January in response to a written interpretation by lawmaker-cum-unionist Lei Chan U, who has released the bureau's response recently.

In the written reply, DSAL Director Wong Chi Hong noted that during the three-year period, the bureau received a total of 667 notifications regarding the employment of minors, involving 1,333 individuals working mainly as "waiters" and "retail salespersons" in the "hotel and catering" and "wholesale and retail" industries.

Regarding Lei's interpellation about the need for a timely review of the revised list of jobs restricted and prohibited for minors in light of the city's economic and social developments, Wong said, as quoted in the statement, that the Labour Relations Law provides special protection for minors, including safeguarding their labour rights and interests, as well as their physical and mental health.

According to Wong, the law outlines specific conditions of employment, prohibitions and restrictions on certain jobs, health protections, and each employer's obligation to notify the government about employed minors. Wong pointed out that the law clearly stipulates that employers may only hire minors who have reached the minimum age of employment and are provided with a medical certificate confirming in writing that they are physically and mentally fit to perform their employment duties, as well as have a written permission from their parent or guardian. Employers are also required to submit a copy of the contract, the medical certificate, and the written permission to the bureau within 15 days from the date of concluding the employment contract with the minor, except in the case of hiring summer workers.



This file photo taken early this month shows Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) Director Wong Chi Hong addressing a press briefing. – Photo: Yuki Lei

In the statement, Wong stressed that his bureau would, through preventive monitoring and inspections, especially during the summer school holidays, remind employers and minors of the need to comply with the relevant statutory requirements in establishing labour relations. He also said that in order to meet the needs of socio-economic development, the bureau would always keep an eye on the proper enforcement of the Labour Relations Law and continue to listen to the views and suggestions from different sectors of the community for better protection of employees' rights and interests.

'Underage employees are a vulnerable segment of the labour force'

Meanwhile, citing the official third quarterly employment survey of last year, Lei pointed out in his interpellation that at that time there were 14,200 employees in the 16-24 age group in Macau, which, however, did not include a statistical breakdown on the number of underage employees aged 16 or above but under 18 years old.

Lei expressed concern about the physical and mental health of underage employees, pointing out that given the relatively low labour standards in Macau, a standard workweek of 48 hours could place "certain" pressure on the physical and mental health of underage employees. He also said that underage employees, as a vulnerable segment of the labour force, require special attention and protection from both the government and civil society. ■

Residents, lawmakers call for amending noise pollution law amid rising complaints

Ginnie Liang

Residents and lawmakers voiced concerns over the effectiveness of Macau's over a decade-old noise pollution law during a current affairs phone-in programme hosted by Ou Mun Tin Toi yesterday.

Directly-elected lawmaker-cum-social worker Nick Lei Leong Wong, who participated in the programme yesterday, pointed out that while over 99 percent of noise complaints were officially registered by the authorities, many of the complainants believe that merely registering their complaints does not mean that they be resolved, prompting calls for a comprehensive review of the law.

Lei highlighted the need to reassess the current penalties, enforcement methods, and noise control periods under the law after more than 10 years since its enactment, because of which, he said, it was high time to amend the law to better address modern noise issues.

Lei also stressed the importance of enhancing the mediation skills of property management staff and other community stakeholders to handle disputes more effectively.

Choi Tong, a member of the government-appointed Central District Community Service Consultative Council, echoed Lei's sentiments, calling for targeted training for property management personnel. He also suggested investigating whether certain noises, such as knocking and water sounds, as well as vibrations, are caused by building structures, which would require different solutions.

During yesterday's programme, residents raised concerns about noise disturbances caused by motor vehicles, pets, and social gatherings.

Lei urged the police to step up their enforcement measures against modified vehicles causing excessive noise and encouraged



Directly-elected lawmaker-cum-social worker Nick Lei Leong Wong (left) and government-appointed Central District Community Service Consultative Council member Choi Tong look on during yesterday's phone-in programme hosted by public broadcaster TDM's Chinese-language radio channel. – Photo courtesy of TDM

members of the public to report such incidents. He also proposed balancing noise reduction measures for commercial and social activities, such as using quieter machinery for construction works and introducing electric shuttle buses for staff members to minimise operational noise.

For pet-related noise, Lei urged pet owners to enhance animal training, while for persistent noise issues in areas frequented by non-local residents, he called for stricter enforcement and potential prosecution after repeated warnings.

Choi emphasised the importance of controlling noise at its source, suggesting the establishment of neighbourhood mediation mechanisms and enhanced interdepartmental patrols, warnings, and the laying of charges, and he also appealed for mutual respect and communication among neighbours to minimise noise that disrupts daily life.

In response to the programme, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) revealed in a statement yesterday that it received 10,554 noise complaints last year,

a 4.6 percent increase year-on-year, among which 39 percent were related to public space noise, while nearly 30 percent involved residential and pet-related noise.

Despite the rise in complaints, the bureau noted a general decline in reports of residential, commercial, and construction noise in recent years, attributing this trend to effective public awareness campaigns, the statement said.

The statement noted that public space noise complaints were concentrated in tourist areas such as Largo do Senado (議事亭前地) and the Ruins of St. Paul (大三巴), as well as recreational zones in neighbourhoods like San Kio, Ribeira do Patane, and around the area of Avenida de Horta e Costa.

Regarding potential amendments to the current law, the bureau said that the current noise control periods were established after extensive consultation to balance residents' rest and activity needs, and that any changes would require broad societal consensus, and the bureau pledged to continue gathering public input for further analysis. ■

Pharma bureau recalls Taiwan-made 'Huang Lien Chieh Tu Pill S.F' exceeding bacterial limit

Ginnie Liang

The Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) said in a statement yesterday that Batch No. UD04 of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) "Huang Lien Chieh Tu Pill 'S.F'", produced by Taiwan-based Taiwan Three Mast Pharmaceutical Limited, has been recalled from the local market as it has a bacterial content exceeding the limit of the registration criteria.

The product, which is used to treat dry mouth, dry throat, haematuria (the presence of blood in the urine), constipation and facial blisters, was found to contain an excessive amount of moulds and yeasts, the statement noted.

According to the information provided by the importer, the affected

batches of the products have been supplied to community pharmacies, traditional Chinese medicine shops and polyclinics in Macau.

The bureau urged local pharmacies to stop selling the problematic product, the statement said, adding that local pharmacies have been notified by their respective drug importers to remove the medicine from their shelves.

The statement stressed that the bureau is paying close attention to the matter, adding that residents who obtain the medicine from their neighbourhood pharmacies may consult their attending physician or pharmacist for "proper handling of the drug".

Enquiries can be made by calling 8598 3533 during office hours. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Macau's Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) yesterday shows the Taiwan-made traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) "Huang Lien Chieh Tu Pill 'S.F'", produced by Taiwan Three Mast Pharmaceutical Limited.

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
MIST IN THE MORNING AND AT NIGHT.
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 99%.



15°C~22°C

Source: SMG

Man, 61, 'burnt to a crisp' in 'suspicious' fire: Fire Services Bureau

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PJ rule out possibility of homicide

The Judiciary Police (PJ) said in a statement early today that the victim was a person with long-term mental problems and a record of self-injury, adding that he lived with a family member in the flat, but the other family member had recently left the home for a few days.

The statement also quoted the social worker who had been looking after the victim as saying that the victim had received medical treatment. The social worker visited the victim's home yesterday and followed up on his condition, and left only in the evening. At about 7 p.m. after leaving the victim's home, the social worker received a call from the victim, who behaved abnormally and suddenly ended the call with the social worker.

According to the PJ statement, the fire started in a room in the flat, where the victim was found on a chair. It added that no signs of fighting or looting were found inside the flat and that the door to the flat was locked from the inside when firefighters arrived.

PJ spokesman Chong Kim Fong said, as quoted by the statement, that "after examination of the body and a forensic pathologist, the injuries sustained by the deceased were consistent with the circumstances of the scene, and no other suspicious injuries or suspected to have been inflicted were found," ruling out the possibility of homicide during the preliminary investigation.

The exact cause of the death has yet to be determined until the outcome of a forensic examination of the body, the statement said. ■

Police nab local man for drunk driving

Ada Lei

The Public Security Police (PSP) arrested a local man on Monday for drunk driving and negligent injury, and his blood alcohol concentration was 1.94 grams per litre, PSP spokesman Lai In Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The self-employed suspect surnamed U is in his fifties.

According to Lai, the police received a report about a traffic accident on Avenida Marginal Flor de Lótus (蓮花海濱大馬路) in Cotai on Monday evening, in which two cars collided as U was suspected of not yielding. After hitting a woman's car, U lost control and crashed into a flower bed and a stone wall in the opposite lane.

Lai noted that the female driver, who passed a breathalyser, sustained minor injuries and was taken by ambulance to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for treatment. U was reeking of alcohol, and a breathalyser test showed that

his blood alcohol concentration was 1.94 grams per litre, confirming his drunk-driving offence.

Under questioning, U admitted to drinking alcoholic beverages in a restaurant on Rua do Regedor (地堡街) in Taipa.

U has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of drunk driving and negligent injury. ■



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

'Not the right time yet' to raise public servants' wages: Sam



This handout photo provided by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday shows representatives from the Macau Civil Servants Federation (MCSF) meeting with Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (centre) and some of his portfolio policy secretaries regarding his upcoming 2025 Policy Address.

Yuki Lei

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai continued yesterday to listen to views and suggestions from different sectors of civil society in preparation for his 2025 Policy Address in April – and Macau Civil Servants Federation (MCSF) Chairman Pang Kung Hou told the media after his group's meeting with Sam in the afternoon that the chief executive's response to a possible pay rise for public servant was "quite engaged", quoting Sam as saying that "it's not the right time yet" for a salary increase, particularly in view of the government's expenditure situation on various fronts.

According to Pang, his group has put forward a total of 15 points on Sam's 2025 Policy Address, centred on issues such as the public service promotion system, remuneration packages and the development of the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. At the meeting, Pang said, discussions were also held on a possible cross-career promotion system, enhancement of a "balance system"* in the civil service, and public servants' attitudes towards the national security.

Speaking to reporters outside Government Headquarters, Pang said: "As [Sam] has also taken into account the [government's] expenses in many areas, he said that it is not yet the right time to adjust the salary upwards for public servants". However, he added, Sam also said that the government would study the recommendations put forward by the group, including raising the level of annual public service allowances to 15 salary points – each currently standing at 94 patacas.

Pang said: "For public servants at the basic ranks, an upward adjustment of the seniority allowance will have a greater effect for them... If this adjustment is made, it should greatly alleviate the pressure they face in their daily lives." He quoted Sam as saying that he would take the suggestion seriously.

On the improvement of the cross-career promotion system, Pang also said the government recognised that the system would be effective in boosting the morale of public servants and enhancing their work efficiency, quoting Sam as pledging that the government

would implement the relevant system proactively in accordance with the local laws: "In fact, there are many areas with too many staff and others where there are not enough".

Regarding the development of the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the association, according to Pang, also proposed that the government establish a promotion and advancement mechanism there for Macau's public servants, while linking it to Macau's civil service, with the aim of encouraging public servants' greater participation, particularly the younger ones, in the zone's development.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak and Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man. ■

*A "balance system" for employees typically refers to strategies, policies, or programmes implemented by organisations to help employees achieve a healthy work-life balance. – DeepSeek

Trade union says gaming workers' stress on the rise last year

Ginnie Liang

Gaming workers' job insecurity decreased by 7.61 percent compared to the COVID-19 pandemic year in 2021, but the index of emotional exhaustion at work increased by 12.31 percent, and physical and mental adjustment problems surged by 24.15 percent, reflecting the psychological challenges posed by the industry's restructuring, Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home senior member Pak Kin Pong said yesterday.

The Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home, a trade union for those working in the gaming sector, held a press conference yesterday about its 2024 annual services report, releasing the results of the survey on gaming workers' mental status and the influencing factors.

The survey was carried from May 12 to June 11, when the association collected 1,182 valid questionnaires from current gaming workers

aged between 30 and 49, of whom 445 were male and 737 were female, according to the press conference.

Findings of the survey found that frequent night shifts were a factor that exacerbated physical and mental adjustment problems, reduced perceived social support and the length of time spent participating in various types of leisure activities, adding that most of the respondents did not have a habit of exercising, reflecting that the promotion of sport for all still needed to be strengthened.

The centre has provided counselling services to 229 people, the unionists noted during the press conference, who pointed out that about 66.44 percent of the cases were work related issues and challenges in finding a job, followed by psychological and emotional problems, which stood at 15.38 percent, and gambling disorders,

which amounted to 6.29 percent of the cases, according to Pak.

Pak said that while most of the gaming workers expressed optimism about the industry, the union has also received feedback from a number of employees that they are under psychological and emotional pressure due to the upgrading of electronic equipment, increase in the number of gamblers, and tightening of disciplinary controls, which have resulted in varying degrees of physical and psychological burdens on them.

Pak pointed out that the union will strengthen public awareness of the "principle of proactive management of work-related issues", with the aim of encouraging gaming industry employees to make use of professional counselling services to resolve workplace problems.

At the same time, the unionist also said they were planning to

launch a "Reference Manual on Supporting People Disturbed by Gambling" in the middle of this year, so as to enhance the effectiveness of the prevention and treatment of gambling disorders. They also said their organisation would also

continue to enhance its regular services, including counselling and crisis management, so as to facilitate employees' physical and psychological work adjustments and also to promote the industry's healthy development. ■



Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home senior member Pak Kin Pong (left), the trade union's Chairman Leong Sun lok (centre) and President Lou lo Wa look on during yesterday's press conference about their 2024 annual services report at its headquarters in Mei Lam Garden Building. – Photo courtesy of TDM



Exploring the asalato with Dave Wan

Interview by Rui Pastorin

In 2013, local nature and music lover Dave Wan (尹均球) was gifted a pair of African asalatos, piquing his interest to learn how to play the percussion instrument. He formed a deeper connection with it when his son was born, seeing the happiness the instrument brought whenever he played it, igniting a desire to go deeper, hoping to play it together one day.

Today, Wan, the founder of the woodworking shop “Zawood”, a percussionist and a member of local band Náv, has around 12 years of playing experience and is inseparable from his asalato. And he hopes to share knowledge about the instrument, its benefits and his passion with others.

Wan told his story and insights into the instrument to the *Post* during a recent interview at Zawood on Pátio do Coronel Mesquita (美上校園).

Asalato?

The asalato may look like a simple instrument, but it has many techniques and possibilities and even offers integration with other music, Wan said. Small and portable, the instrument features a deep and very complex rhythm, along with a special way of playing, he said.

Wan said that the asalato originates from West Africa and is a very natural instrument used as a toy for children, with the Zawood website noting that traditionally it consists of the dried fruit of the African *oncoba spinosa* tree and is connected by a rope, altogether having three parts: two balls, a short rope, and grains or seeds inside each ball.

To play it, you need to swing your hands backwards and forwards and strike each ball with each other, creating a clacking sound accompanied by the shaking of the seeds, grains or beans, with Wan pointing out that it has a very characteristic sound. “When you hear it, you know that it’s the asalato”.

Being a traditional instrument with a long history, it has over time spread to other countries such as Japan, where other techniques and rhythms were created through its development there, according to Wan. He noted in particular that, compared to how it is traditionally played in West Africa, where rhythm is relatively stable and simple while incorporating some singing, in Japan it integrates many elements of modern music and even some juggling.

Materials such as plastic, bamboo, wood and metal have also been used since its spread to other places, such as having players in Japan where asalato communities have mainly formed, apart from the mainland, China’s Taiwan region, Hong Kong, and Macau, though the latter does not have as many in comparison, Wan said.

Hác-Sálato: ‘the sound of Macau’

By around 2021, Wan wanted to create a version of the asalato rooted in Macau, with his team doing research and finding good quality materials and the right sound. This led to the creation of the “Hác-Sálato”.

Special considerations had to be made as Macau’s weather is different to West Africa’s, being more humid. In this context, traditional materials, which can also be expensive to import and not easy to obtain, may not be as sturdy or produce the best sound. The Hác-Sálato was created using a coated natural gourd, which is durable and creates a unique acoustic effect. And for its distinct sound, sand from Macau’s Hac Sa beach is also used

inside each ball. That’s where its local name comes from.

Wan said its creation does not serve as a replacement for the original instrument, but instead creates more options. “I have more options for people to hear different sounds, especially from Macau. This has the Macau element inside of it, so when I play it, that means you will hear the sound of Macau”, Wan said.

Happiness, coordination and focus

Wan also spoke about how the asalato has become more than just an instrument for him, but a part of his life, playing it every chance he gets daily and taking it everywhere via a carabiner on his belt, preferring it to his smartphone.

The 49-year-old said that it allows him to enter a state of meditation while also creating movement due to the constant shaking while playing, being just some of the benefits that one might experience when picking up the instrument.

However, it may not be easy to learn how to play it right away due to the movements required, said Wan, noting: “Not many people usually shake or vibrate their bodies” or are very active. But this is where another benefit comes in, noting that it’s good for one’s body, dexterity and hand-eye coordination, Wan said, adding that when you get it right, it will help you feel relaxed and happy, allowing yourself not only to move, but maybe even find that meditative state. To further explore benefits, Wan also tries to create more playing styles, like the incorporation of Tai Chi movements hoping to garner interest by all ages.

Moreover, Wan noted, helping improve focus, which is required when playing it, is also a benefit, allowing the mind to be in one place, while coordination and balance can also be improved. “That’s why we have our slogan, ‘Shake in Balance’”.

Looking ahead

Wan continues to focus on promoting the asalato in Macau. However, promoting it as simply an instrument to learn or offering a path to become a musician is not the best way to go about it, he said, adding: “It’s a tool for practising your mind and your body, it relaxes you and maybe [allows] a bit of meditation”.

He added that many people are taking in a lot of information, especially through their phones, leading to a cluttered mind. “This tool helps you calm down a little bit and focus on what you are doing right here, right now”.

More information, including on workshops to create one’s asalato, can be found on <https://www.zawood.com/>



Govt demolishes dilapidated building

Tony Wong

The government has demolished a dilapidated building that had been classified as posing a danger to public safety on Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida (荷蘭園大馬路), the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) said in a statement yesterday.

According to the statement, the bureau had ordered the property owner to demolish the building with its roof having already collapsed, but the owner did not take any action, because of which the bureau carried out the demolition and will order the owner to bear the cost.

The statement underlined that property owners are statutorily required to carry out regular maintenance and repairs to their buildings in order to keep them in good condition.

The statement said that after the roof of the building, located on the avenue's southernmost section, collapsed, the bureau had officially classified it as dilapidated after carrying out an on-site inspection.

Consequently, the statement said, the bureau issued a notice ordering the building's owner to demolish it "but the bureau did not receive any response from the owner". Considering the building's roof had collapsed and that it was posing a "serious" threat to public safety, the bureau has carried out the demolition, the statement said.

The statement pointed out that the bureau carries out inspections of buildings across the city to assess their conditions, through its routine inspections or after receiving complaints from residents or case transfers from other public entities.

The statement noted that if a building shows signs of poor

maintenance, the bureau will notify the owner to hire qualified professionals within a specified period to inspect the building and prepare a report that documents the parts on the building in poor condition and proposes solutions.

The respective property owners failing to submit the report within the specified period will face a fine of between 2,500 patacas and 50,000 patacas for individuals, or a fine of between 5,000 patacas and 100,000 patacas for companies or organisations, the statement said.

The statement noted that if a building is "obviously" in poor condition or even dilapidated, the bureau will carry out an inspection of the building and notify its owner of the inspection findings, after which the owner must hire qualified professionals within a specified period to draw up a plan for a project to repair, consolidate, or partially or completely demolish the building.

If a building is on the brink of collapse thereby posing a danger to public health or safety, the bureau will order the owner to immediately carry out the necessary works, the statement noted, adding that if the owner fails to address the issue promptly, the bureau will carry out the demolition itself "in the public interest", after which the owner will be required to bear the cost.

The respective property owners failing to carry out the necessary works within the specified period such as repairs or demolition will face a fine of between 5,000 patacas and 200,000 patacas for individuals, or a fine of between 15,000 patacas and 500,000 patacas for companies or organisations, the statement said. ■



This undated handout photo released by the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) yesterday shows the building with its roof having collapsed on Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida.

Police apprehend 3 illegal currency exchange dealers



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the two hooded suspects to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.

— Photos : Ada Lei

Ada Lei

A local man and two male mainlanders were arrested separately on Monday for participating in illegal currency exchange and fraud, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a special press conference yesterday.

In the first case, there are two suspects. The 62-year-old local suspect surnamed U claimed to be jobless. The 34-year-old suspect is a non-resident worker (NRW) surnamed Lu, who is suspected to have been illegally employed by a restaurant.

According to Cheong, PJ officers on patrol saw Lu providing an illegal currency exchange deal to a man from the mainland after talking to U in a casino in Cotai on Monday afternoon. U displayed a payment QR code for the male gambler and handed over HK\$10,000 to him after receiving 9,700 yuan. PJ officers apprehended them on the spot and confiscated HK\$210,000 from Lu.

Under questioning, both suspects admitted to engaging in illegal currency exchanges since December.

U's job was it to find customers, while Lu was tasked with conducting the transactions. They made a profit of 350 yuan each in this deal.

In the second case, the 46-year-old male suspect surnamed Cai is a non-resident worker employed by a restaurant.

According to Cheong, a man from the mainland met Cai in December while gambling in Macau when they struck a currency exchange deal and exchanged contact information. Cai contacted the man for another currency exchange deal on Sunday after he discovered that he was gambling in Macau. The man showed interest as he wanted to transfer his winnings to the mainland. After negotiating the terms, both agreed to exchange HK\$3 million into 2.8 million yuan. They arranged to meet in the lobby of a casino in Cotai for the transaction. The man handed over HK\$3 million to Cai after the latter had promised to transfer the money to the victim's mainland bank account within a few hours.

However, by Monday the man

had still not received the money, so he contacted Cai in the morning. Cai claimed that he had already gambled away HK\$2.3 million of the HK\$3 million that he had received from the victim so that he still only had HK\$700,000 on him. He returned the HK\$700,000 to the man and signed an IOU for the HK\$2.3 million, promising to pay it back as soon as possible. Later that day, the man met Cai in another lobby of a casino in Cotai and requested he return the money right away. Cai refused and attempted to escape, but security guards intervened and apprehended him. The man then reported the case to the police later that day.

Under questioning, Cai refused to cooperate. The police confirmed that he had not gambled the money away, as he had claimed, and seized HK\$2 million from him.

The three suspects were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday and are facing charges of illegal currency exchange activities. Cai is additionally facing a charge of fraud. ■

Police nab HK-mainland duo for 'transferring' fake cash

Ada Lei

A man from the mainland and a man from Hong Kong were arrested on Monday for their alleged involvement in a counterfeit money case, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said in a special conference yesterday.

The 24-year-old Hong Kong suspect surnamed Yu and the 38-year-old man from the mainland surnamed Fang told the police that they are jobless.

According to Cheong, a casino in Cotai reported to the police on Monday that Yu had attempted to buy gaming chips with 409 counterfeit HK\$1,000 notes. During the procedure of verifying the banknotes, the cashier discovered that none of them were genuine as there were differences in colour and paper quality compared to genuine ones. The police arrived at the scene and arrested Yu, who told the police



A Judiciary Police (PJ) officer shows reporters the bogus HK\$1,000 notes displayed in a press room of the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.

— Photo: Ada Lei

that it was Fang who brought the bogus money to Macau. The police arrested Fang in the same casino half an hour later. The police confirmed that the 409 HK\$1,000 notes were fake, with four groups of serial numbers, and obvious differences in colour and paper quality.

The duo claimed that they had

been hired by an unknown figure from the mainland to "transfer" the counterfeit money to Macau, for which each was promised a "commission" of 3,000 yuan.

Both suspects were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of transferring counterfeit currency. ■

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 3.27 pct lower

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's stock market rallied yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index soaring 3.27 percent to close at 23,787.93 points. The Hang Seng China

Enterprises Index hiked 3.46 percent to 8,792.89 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index surged 4.47 percent to 5,953.79 points.

— Xinhua

Financial reserves reach 616.4 billion patacas at 2024 end, up 6 pct

Tony Wong

The government's financial reserves reached 616.4 billion patacas at the end of last year, an increase of six percent from the 581.4 billion patacas at the end of 2023, according to a notice published by the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

However, the 616.4 billion patacas represented a decrease of 0.3 percent from the 618.3 billion patacas at the end of November last year.

The total amount of the financial reserves at the end of November in 2024 was published in an AMCM notice last month.

Macau's financial reserves amounted to the record high of 669.6 billion patacas at the end of February in 2021, according to the gazette. ■



This undated photo downloaded from the Facebook page of the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) yesterday shows its headquarters on Guia Hill in the peninsula.

China remains attractive investment destination: AmCham

GUANGZHOU – The American Chamber of Commerce in South China (AmCham South China) released yesterday its 2025 Special Report on the State of Business in South China, which highlighted that the world's second-largest economy continues to be an attractive investment destination.

This year's report, the 21st in the series, provides a comprehensive and quantitative analysis of the business community, offering valuable insights into development trends in South China. A total of 316 companies participated in the latest survey in 2024.

The report highlights China's leading position in global investment priorities, with 58 percent of foreign companies surveyed ranking it among their top three investment priorities. Looking ahead to 2025, 76 percent of the companies intend to reinvest in China, with a notable 74 percent of the American companies planning reinvestments, up 11 percentage points year on year.

The surveyed companies are mainly from the US, China, and the European Union. More than half of them are wholly foreign-owned, and over 30 percent American-invested. The proportion of companies that generated over 60 percent of their global revenue from China increased by 5 percentage points, reaching a total of 31 percent, said the report.

ExxonMobil China is a testament to the increasing confidence foreign investors have in the country, with the company recently launching trial production at a new petrochemical project in Guangdong's Huizhou. Additionally, it will open a cutting-edge technology center in the province to bolster its research

and development capabilities to support global customers.

"China is a key part of our growth strategy, and Guangdong is an outstanding partner. We strongly value its professional and efficient government, well-developed infrastructure and business-friendly environment, and skilled workforce," said Jean-Marc Taton, chairman of ExxonMobil China.

Growth potential of the Chinese market continues to be the primary driver for increasing investments in China or shifting investments from other markets to China, followed by the industrial cluster effect and preferential policies, according to Harley Seyedin, Chairman and President of AmCham South China.

In 2024, mainland China's GDP reached a record 134.91 trillion yuan (US\$18.81 trillion), marking a 5-percent year-on-year increase. This robust economic performance continues to attract global investors. Additionally, the ongoing policy incentives from China have also boosted the confidence of foreign enterprises.

In February, China issued an action plan to stabilize foreign investment, with efforts to expand opening-up in sectors like telecommunication, biotechnology and medical services, and offering comprehensive services for foreign-invested projects.

It encourages foreign investment in the high-tech and animal husbandry industries, and in services such as health care and finance. The plan also lifts restrictions on loans for foreign firms and ensures equal participation in government procurement for both foreign and domestic companies.

"China is in the process of moving up the value chain, and we believe the Chinese consumer

market will continue to grow exponentially," Seyedin said. He noted that over 73 percent of AmCham's member companies in south China are no longer focused on exports; instead, they are primarily involved in importing or producing goods and services for the Chinese market.

Last September, China's National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce jointly issued the 2024 version of the negative list for foreign investment access, announcing the removal of all restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector.

This move is viewed favorably by a substantial proportion of the companies surveyed, with some optimistic that the policy will create greater investment opportunities and broader market access, thereby facilitating expansion and growth.

Seyedin told Xinhua that lifting all restrictions on manufacturing investment in China could lead to a 30-percent increase in investment activities and an expansion of the country's manufacturing capabilities.

It is estimated that the member companies of AmCham South China have set aside a total of US\$14.59 billion from their profits in China for reinvestment over the next three to five years. This will be used to expand existing operations and capture additional market share, representing a 33.18-percent increase compared to the previous reinvestment figure.

"Businesses are increasing their commitments in China to secure a stronger foothold in this critical market. The reinvestment surge signals confidence in China's future, and their hope for US-China increased cooperation," Seyedin said. – Xinhua

China to lower asset threshold for HK, mainland institutions investing in insurers

BEIJING – The National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA) yesterday announced that China will lower the asset requirement threshold for Hong Kong and Macau financial institutions to invest in mainland insurers, as part of its efforts to deepen opening-up in the financial sector.

From March 1, Hong Kong and Macau financial institutions will no longer be required to have assets totaling no less than US\$2 billion at the end of the previous year to invest in mainland insurance companies, the NFRA said.

The adjustment follows agreements signed in October 2024 between the mainland and Hong Kong, as well as between the

mainland and Macao, to revise the services trade protocols under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and the CEPA between the mainland and Macao. These revisions include changes to the qualification requirements for Hong Kong and Macau financial institutions looking to invest in mainland insurers.

This latest move is a significant step in expanding financial opening-up, according to the NFRA. It is expected to help mainland insurance companies attract high-quality investors from Hong Kong and Macau financial institutions, strengthen their capital base, and optimize their equity structures. – Xinhua

China a key player in global 'innovation landscape', says Mercedes-Benz CEO

Interview

STUTTGART, Germany – China is a key player in global innovation, CEO of Mercedes-Benz Group Sten Ola Källenius has told Xinhua in a recent interview.

As the German company celebrates its 20th anniversary in China, it underscores China's vital role as an innovation hub, shaping both its operations in China and its global strategy.

"China is a home away from home for us," said Kaellenius, who assumed leadership of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association on Jan. 1, 2025.

Since entering the Chinese market in 2005 with local passenger car production and R&D operations, Mercedes-Benz has consistently invested in innovation and growth.

"We committed early to China, have grown in China, have been successful in China," Källenius said in a recent interview with Chinese media.

In March 2024, Beijing Benz, the joint venture between Beijing Automotive Group Co. Ltd. and Mercedes-Benz, marked the milestone of producing its 5 millionth vehicle. Later in September 2024, Mercedes-Benz and its Chinese partners announced an additional 14 billion yuan investment to expand their product offerings in the region.

According to Källenius, China's importance extends far beyond its status as the world's largest car market.

Over the years, the German automaker has strengthened its R&D activities in China through collaborations with tech, innovation and supply chain partners.

The company has successfully integrated its Chinese R&D into its global innovation network, with China being a key pillar.



This undated file photo shows Ola Källenius, CEO of Mercedes-Benz Group and president of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association. – Xinhua

China serves as "an innovation hub, not just for China, but also for the world," Källenius said.

By tapping into China's robust electric mobility supply chains, Mercedes-Benz has enhanced vehicle digitalization with a focus on automated driving and in-car entertainment to bolster its market presence.

In China's highly competitive automotive market, Källenius emphasized that Mercedes-Benz places great importance on a long-term strategy driven by innovation and new product development.

He added that it is high-tech and innovative offerings that distinguish the company from its competitors.

Reaffirmed Mercedes-Benz's commitment to zero-emission mobility, which he sees as the industry's ultimate destination, Källenius said, "It may not be a straight line and every market goes to the same spot at the same time, but we are on our way towards zero emission and China will play a leading role in this." – Xinhua