

'Hearing impairment ranks 2nd among disabilities': MDA

Yuki Lei

Today marks World Hearing Day, with this year's theme "Changing mindset: Empowering yourself to make ear and hearing care a reality for all!" – and locally, Macau Deaf Association (MDA) Director Nerissa Lau Sut Man told the media yesterday that her group currently looks after about 800 people, adding that over the last three years there has been more than a double-digit increase in the number of people with hearing impairment, a condition which ranks second among locals' disabilities.

The Macau Deaf Association has co-organised its annual awareness-raising campaign on ear and hearing care, holding the kick-off ceremony yesterday in Flower City Park in Taipa.

Delivering a speech during the ceremony, Lau quoted the World Health Organisation (WHO) as noting that as of 2021, the number of people experiencing hearing loss worldwide had exceeded 1.5 billion, or about 20 percent of the world's population, predicting that by 2050, the number of people with hearing loss could surge by 1.5 times to 2.5 billion, or about 25 percent of the world's population, with 700 million, or about 10 percent of the world's population, requiring professional therapeutic intervention.

According to Lau, individuals with hearing impairments can be categorised into various groups, each with distinct needs. Citing data from the Social Welfare Bureau's (IAS) disability assessment, she noted that hearing disability ranks second among all local disabilities, with over 5,000 cases. "However, these 5,000 or so do not represent the total number of more than 10,000," she said.

Lau elaborated that the needs of hearing-impaired groups in Macau are "diversified",



Macau Deaf Association (MDA) Director Nerissa Lau Sut Man delivers a speech during yesterday's kick-off ceremony of the awareness-raising campaign on ear and hearing care, in Flower City Park in Taipa. – Photos: Yuki Lei

← A hearing-impaired child wearing an hearing aid attends yesterday's ceremony.

with those who are born deaf primarily relying on sign language for communication, while individuals fitted with hearing aids after birth often use spoken language as their main means of communication. However, she was quick to add that the current policy in Macau relies solely on the data from the government's disability assessment registrations, which,

she said, do not account for hidden cases of individuals who have not yet applied for financial assistance.

"Referring to information from the World Health Organisation, one in five people will experience a hearing problem in their life. In Macau...in our daily interactions, we encounter many cases of individuals who,

despite not being registered [for disability assessment], do have hearing problems. Thus, the [government's] data should be viewed as just a reference point," Lau stressed, adding that the actual number of people with hearing problems in Macau is likely to be higher than the official statistics.

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Casino takings rise 6.8 pct last month, up 0.5 pct in Jan-Feb

Staff Reporter

Macau's 30 casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 19.744 billion patacas (US\$2.46 billion) last month, a year-on-year growth of 6.8 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced on Saturday.

Month on month, GGR was up by 8.16 percent from the 18.254 billion patacas recorded in December 2024. In January, GGR fell by 5.6 percent year on year.

In the first two months, GGR increased by 0.5 percent year on year to 37.998 billion patacas. ■

GDP rises 8.8 pct in 2024, reaches US\$73,154 per capita

Staff Reporter

Macau's gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 8.8 percent year-on-year in real terms to 403.3 billion patacas last year, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) has announced.

According to a DSEC statement on Friday, the overall economic output returned to 86.4 percent of the level in pre-pandemic 2019.

Macau recorded its first COVID-19 case in January 2020.

Exports of services and domestic demand (including private consumption expenditure, government final consumption expenditure and investment) showed respective growth of 9.2 percent and 2.3 percent year-on-year.

Per-capita GDP, i.e., the average value of production of

goods and services per population, stood at 587,922 patacas (US\$73,154) in 2024, up by 7.6 percent year-on-year.

Exports of gaming services grew by 21.8 percent; however, exports of other tourism services dropped by 6.1 percent owing to a relatively high comparison base in the previous year, yet rose by 13.0 percent when compared to 2019. ■

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The Macau Post Daily

Western media's skepticism toward China's visa-free policy is misplaced

As China moves forward with an unprecedented expansion of its unilateral visa-free policy, some Western media have rushed to downplay the significance of this effort for greater global openness.

– Story on p. 7

US Republicans suggest Zelensky may have to step down

Top Washington officials suggested yesterday that Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky might have to step down if a peace deal is to be reached, underscoring President Donald Trump's stunning shift in approach to the war with Russia.

– Story on p. 11

Colourful Angolan carnival celebrates half century independence

Their sweat-stained faces lit only by a dim yellow bulb in a neglected corner of the capital Luanda, revellers sway their hips to the sound of a catchy beat on the eve of the annual Angolan carnival.

– Story on p. 12

Ne Zha – China’s soft power answer to Mickey Mouse



Finally, I found time on Saturday night to see “Ne Zha 2” at a local cinema, China’s record-breaking animated fantasy adventure film which is now ranked 7th on the all-time global box office chart, with a total office revenue surpassing that of “Spider-Man: No Way Home”, according to cinema ticketing platforms cited by Xinhua.

The film has been shown by seven cineplexes in Macau in Putonghua with Chinese and English subtitles since February 22. However, many locals have been flocking to see the film in cinemas in Zhuhai where ticket prices are more affordable.

The movie entered the list of the top 10 highest-grossing films of all time globally on February 17, the 20th day after its release on January 29, the first day of the 2025 Chinese New Year.

As of 1:50 p.m. on Saturday, about six hours before I began watching the film in one of Macau’s state-of-the-art movie theatres, its global earnings had exceeded 14.2 billion yuan (nearly US\$2.0 billion), according to ticketing platform Maoyan.

This milestone, Xinhua pointed out, is just one of the film’s various impressive achievements, such as it is now the world’s first movie to gross over US\$1 billion in a single market, and the first non-Hollywood film to enter the coveted billion-dollar club. And, last but not least, it has dethroned Disney’s 2024 movie “Inside Out 2” to become the highest-grossing animated movie of all time globally.

Just a few years ago it would have been unimaginable that a Chinese movie would be able to garner a global film ranking of that stature.

Before seeing the film, some of my friends “warned” me that it has a running time of 144 minutes, i.e., two hours and 24 minutes. Customarily, most mainstream movies average around 90 minutes.

Of course, epic films – such as Avatar (162 minutes) often run much longer to accommodate particularly complex screenplays and elaborate action scenes – as is the case with “Ne Zha 2”.

As its title indicates, “Ne Zha 2”

is a sequel to the 2019 animated box office hit “Ne Zha”, both written and directed by Jiaozi (born Yang Yu in Luzhou, Sichuan Province, in 1980). The global box office takings of “Ne Zha” reportedly exceeds US\$720 million – a great accomplishment for a Chinese animation film five years ago. I was only able to watch part of it on TVB on Friday night because I got home late after a conversational dinner at a Macanese restaurant with an old media colleague from Hong Kong who, by the way, has written extensively on Hong Kong movies. I will try to watch “Ne Zha” in full length as soon as I can find the time, preferably in a movie theatre as it offers a much better viewing experience than the small screen.

As an amateur cinephile not particularly fond of animated films (one of my favourite films is Alfred Hitchcock’s 1958 “Vertigo”), I must say that I enjoyed watching “Ne Zha 2” from start to finish. Despite its exceptional length, I didn’t feel bored for a single minute.

I don’t want to be a spoiler so I won’t reveal the film’s storyline to all those reading this editorial who haven’t seen the movie yet.

Film critics have pointed out that the film is loosely based on Chinese mythology stories and the 16th-century Chinese novel “Investiture of the Gods” (“Fengshen Yanyi”) while also containing several creative differences.

The film’s main character, as its title shows, is Ne Zha* (哪吒; pronounced in Cantonese as “Na Tcha”), a deity in Chinese mythology and folk belief. His origins can be traced back to ancient Taoist and, I have been told, even Buddhist texts, and he has become one of the most popular and enduring figures in Chinese culture. Over centuries, he has been depicted as a divine warrior and protector. His legendary status was further popularised in the Ming Dynasty novel “The Investiture of the Gods”, one of the most influential works in Chinese literature.

Ne Zha’s story has been described by a raft of authors as a blend of heroism, tragedy, and redemption – the right stuff indeed for an exciting screen play!

For instance, according to legend, his birth was miraculous, as he emerged as a ball of flesh that transformed into a child who then passed through periods of defiance and rebellion (well, most of us have

gone through this, haven’t we) and resurrection and redemption (I am still waiting...).

For about half a millennium, Ne Zha has obtained cultural significance, being admired, worshipped even, as a symbol of youth, bravery, sacrifice, resilience, the struggle between good and evil, and filial piety – the latter of which is an age-old important element of Chinese culture that in Western cultures appears to approach extinction. Ne Zha is often depicted as a young boy with a fiery temper, riding on wind fire wheels and wielding his signature weapons.

Traditional Chinese opera and theatre plays often feature Ne Zha as a heroic figure, and temples dedicated to him can be found in many parts of China, such as Fujian, Taiwan and, as one would expect, Macau.

I have visited Macau’s two “Na Tcha” temples as an agnostic journalist, sometimes showing them to media colleagues, since the 1980s, and I have written and edited quite a number of articles about them. The larger temple, which includes an exhibition hall, is situated close to the Ruins of St. Pauls – their proximity being another indication of Macau’s traditional religious tolerance. I am more familiar with the smaller one, located on a slope behind Ginza Plaza, as I lived for a few years in the neighbourhood.

By chance, I have recently discovered a little café near the Ruins of St. Pauls dedicated to the “Crown Prince”, “Marshal of the Central Altar” and “Third Lotus Prince” – as Ne Zha is also known. The café is located in a quaint townhouse, complete with a courtyard, that offers tasty tidbits and “Na Tcha” memorabilia.

Based on the huge success of “Ne Zha 2”, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) should jump on the bandwagon and start promoting, much more intensively than hitherto, Macau’s “Na Tcha” traditional connection.

I am quite sure that many

tourists, not just foreigners but also those from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora, would like to learn more about Macau’s mainstream Chinese culture. As a Xinhua article underlined last December, in the run-up to the 25th Anniversary of Macau’s return to the motherland: “With traditional Chinese culture at its heart, Macau’s culture is a diverse mixture assimilating Western, particularly Portuguese cultural influences.” The phrase is spot on. I always found it especially interesting that Macau does not just offer visitors a distinct “East-meets-West” atmosphere, but that it is also a profoundly Chinese city, perhaps one of the culturally most Chinese cities on Earth as far as its age-old traditions, customs, patriotism and culinary delights are concerned. That is, by the way, also one of the phenomena that sets Macau apart from Hong Kong.

As far as tourism promotion is concerned, I dislike the hackneyed slogan that describes Macau as “unique”. Well, anyone’s hometown is unique and so are, for example, Hong Kong and Macau. I prefer to describe our beloved city as a “distinct” place.

On an international level, as far as the growing importance of China’s soft power is concerned, I believe that one day, Ne Zha can globally play an iconic role similar to the United States’ Mickey Mouse – a cartoon character and mascot co-created by Walt Disney in 1928.

Potentially, the many legends, novels and stories about Ne Zha offer an abundance of conceptional material to create many more movies for cinema release, TV and streaming – animated or live action – in the years to come to promote Chinese culture worldwide.

Besides, Ne Zha as a legendary, mystical and even spiritual figure has much more historic depth than Mickey Mouse, an anthropomorphic mouse characterised as an empathetic but fumbling underdog.

Following WWII, Mickey Mouse films, comics and merchandise gradually became ubiquitous all over the world.

I hope that not-too-long in the future there will be Ne Zha theme parks on various continents – such as the now 12 Disneyland properties around the world. Our planet needs to diversify culturally as far as “soft power” is concerned. Globalisation must not remain synonymous with Americanisation. Different cultures, which represent diverse value systems, traditions and customs, need to learn from each other – but without mimicking unthinkingly or parroting without reflection the one perceived to be globally dominant.

DeepSeek lists the 1979 animation film “Nezha Conquers the Dragon King” and the 1981 live-action film “Prince Nezha’s Triumph Against Dragon King” as one of the first films about our hero.

I am looking forward to the release of “Ne Zha 3” directed once more by Jiaozi who, however, has indicated that this may only happen within a decade, but others may rise to the challenge so that more films about our hero could hit the big screen much earlier. The future movies featuring Ne Zha will, I hope, be dubbed in many different languages so that it will be easier for children to follow the storyline. After all, children are the future for global understanding!

China needs to further strengthen its soft power efforts, considering the rise of the Global South and the West’s ambiguous response to it.

Our mighty Ne Zha could certainly help.

– Harald Brüning

**This is the pinyin romanisation of the Chinese name, with a space between “Ne” and “Zha”, which is commonly used in academic or formal contexts to adhere to standard pinyin rules. The spelling “Nezha” in English and other languages is often used in popular culture, movies, and media.*

‘Hearing impairment ranks 2nd among disabilities’: MDA

Continued from p.1

On community screening, Lau praised the effective implementation of newborn hearing screening in Macau, “but only for newborns”. Citing the WHO, she emphasised that childhood, kindergarten, adolescence, and even old age are critical periods in the developmental process, “but in Macau we have not included these screenings in our health care for the time being”.

Lau also highlighted the association’s current service targets, noting that the number of people with acquired hearing loss, including industrial hearing loss and age-related hearing deterioration, has been rising in recent years. She suggested that, in addition to incorporating hearing screenings for various age groups

into the public healthcare system, the government should also develop a strategy for universal ear care education, particularly for young people, who often use mobile phones to listen to music and play video games that generate significant noise.

In addition, according to Lau, Macau currently lacks a government-supported audiological service centre, resulting in many hearing-impaired people choosing not to use hearing aids due to lack of support even though they have the financial means to purchase them.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the ceremony, she also urged the government to establish a big data platform on hearing health to accurately gauge the demand, while also, by referencing to WHO indicators,

examining whether the city’s current noise management aligns with international standards.

Lau emphasised the potential for hearing problems to trigger other health conditions: “I think many problems need to be tackled in an integrated manner. We call on the [government] to incorporate these recommendations into the next phase of its 10-year plan for the local elderly and rehabilitation, and to implement them hopefully next year”.

The association’s campaign will continue today from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Lok Yeung Fa Yuen Building sitting-out area in Fai Chi Kei district, where the “Hearing and Ear Health Express Station (耳聽健康快車站)” will be set up to provide hearing screening services for residents. ■

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Macau Weather

HUMID. CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS. MIST AND FOG. A FEW SHOWERS LATER. POSSIBLE THUNDERSTORMS LATER. FORCE 2 TO 4 SOUTH TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 100%.



20°C~26°C

Source: SMG

Lawmaker urges govt to clarify legal basis for granting work permits for film crews

Yuki Lei

Concerning a recent filming accident involving a mainland film crew which resulted in injuries to 12 actors and actresses aged between five and 61, four of which were children, legislator Ron Lam U Tou submitted on Friday a written interpellation requesting the government to clarify the legal basis for the requirements that the granting of a filming permit do not include the need to apply for a work permit, as well as to reveal the progress of amending regulations governing the procedures for filming in streets and other public areas.

Last Monday afternoon, the accident occurred when a mainland film production company was filming a car chase scene in Rua do Seminário. A 62-year-old mainland man, driving a Volkswagen, crashed into pedestrian railings and lost control, driving across a section of gravel next to the road. The incident resulted in injuries to 12 extras hired by the company, including a five-year-old boy and a 42-year-old woman who are local residents. Among the injured, nine

are mainlanders, and one holds a Singaporean passport.

After the incident, the Public Security Police (PSP) said that the driver had entered Macau earlier that day and was allowed to drive in Macau under the “mutual recognition of driving licences”. The police informed the media at a press conference the following day that, after consulting with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), the crew members were not considered to be working illegally in Macau, as they had received permission from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) to film in Macau.

In response, the Cultural Affairs Bureau stated last Tuesday night that it had immediately issued a notice suspending the crew’s filming permit after the incident, noting that a technical meeting had been held with representatives from relevant public entities and the filming unit before the shoot, during which it was made clear that the proposal to film vehicle drifting at that location was prohibited.

Speaking at a press conference about last year’s crime statistics on



This file photo taken last Monday shows the damaged car involved in the filming accident in Calçada de Francisco António. – Photo: William Chan

Thursday, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak said that the crew concerned had obtained a filming permit from the Cultural Affairs Bureau and had filmed in the closed road section, adding that there were no enforcement provisions in the existing regulation.

In the written interpellation, Lam, a directly-elected lawmaker-current affairs commentator, asked the government several

questions, such as, “Which public entity is responsible for ensuring that filming complies with the consensus reached at a coordination meeting and that the filming is conducted safely according to the requirements?” He also asked: “Is it the official view of the Labour Affairs Bureau, and what is the legal basis for the claim that filming will not be regarded as illegal work if a permit is granted for the

filming application for coordination services?”

Additionally, Lam queried why the police officers or supervisory staff at the accident scene did not immediately halt the crew involved in the “car chase” scene, expressing concern about future measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents and to ensure that residents’ safety is not compromised.

He also pointed out that the Cultural Affairs Bureau’s filming permit application platform provides reference information on filming work in Macau by non-local personnel, clearly showing that filming permits may not include the need for work permits for non-locals.

Regarding the fact that the Labour Affairs Bureau is not participating in the government’s “Filming Application Coordination Service”, Lam raised concerns about whether the bureau in the future would play a role in coordinating and monitoring the eligibility of non-local filming crews working in Macau legally, with a view to ensuring local residents’ employment rights and interests. ■

Police warn public of BOC phishing scams



This poster provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) on Saturday warns members of the public of the “BOC SMS scam”.

Ginnie Liang

The Judiciary Police (PJ) warned members of the public of a new kind of phishing SMS scam in a statement on Saturday, which exploit victims through fake Bank of China (BOC) SMS messages containing phishing links, telling the victims that they could redeem e-coupons by paying one pataca using their credit card, according to a statement issued by Judiciary Police (PJ) on Saturday.

The fraud requires victims to log into a purported BOC website and provide their credit card details to redeem e-coupons by only paying one pataca, the statement said.

However, once victims enter their credit card details, the fraudsters exploit the information, resulting in a financial loss, the statement said.

According to the statement, scammers make use of technical means to disguise the official number of BOC to send phishing SMS, thus mixing the real and the fake SMS in the same dialogue

box, and making the public think that the fake message was sent from the official account.

The Bank of China (BOC) said in a statement on Friday that it is not affiliated with the bogus SMS and members of the public should not respond to, open or provide personal information to any link posted in the SMS from any source, stressing that BOC will not request customers to log onto its website to conduct transactions or provide any sensitive personal or credit card information through SMS or email hyperlinks.

BOC said its customers can call the BOC Customer Service Hotline on 8889 5566 if they have any enquiries, the statement said.

PJ warns residents of ‘logistics firm’ phishing scams

In addition, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said in a separate statement on Friday that they have received reports from a number of residents

that they have received a phishing SMS sent by a logistics company called ‘Cai Niao’ which falsely claimed that the user’s delivery address was incomplete and required users to click on the link attached to the SMS to re-enter it.

After clicking on the link, the user is redirected to a phishing website which asks for the user’s name, shipping address and other personal information, and then asks for credit card information, including the card number, expiry date, name of the cardholder, and a security code, on the pretext of paying a service fee for redelivery, the statement said.

After stealing the information, the fraudsters use it to make large unauthorised transactions, the statement said.

Suspected fraud should immediately be reported to the Judiciary Police’s Anti-Fraud Enquiry hotline on 8800 7777 or the crime report hotline 993 for assistance, the statement said. ■

提防假冒菜鳥快遞釣魚短訊 以免個資及信用卡資料被盜用



This poster provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) on Friday warns members of the public of the logistics company “Cai Niao SMS scam”.

IAM urges public to avoid part of Guia Hill wooded area over vine removal

Yuki Lei

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced that it will begin vine removal and woodland stewardship* at Guia Hill Municipal Park starting on March 18, with the first phase to involve clearing vines and removing wilted or dangerous trees, urging the public to avoid the area during the about 90-day project period.

According to an IAM statement on Friday, the seemingly green and wooded area of Guia Hill Municipal Park is in fact plagued by a high incidence of brown root disease, with its natural regulation and self-restoration having been, in recent years, disrupted by windstorm impacts. The extensive cover of invasive lianas, such as Hypserpa nitida, Pueraria montana var. lobata, Cassytha filiformis and Mikania micrantha, has prevented the trees there from obtaining sufficient sunlight for photosynthesis and inhibited the normal growth of understory** tree seedlings, leading to a continuous decline in the woodland

area without any natural regeneration and ultimately resulting in the gradual loss of its ecological functions.

The statement noted that the bureau will launch vine removal and relevant protection work from March 18 onwards, with areas covering both sides of the trail with 33 bends on Estrada do Engenheiro Trigo on Guia Hill and the Guia Hill Fitness Trail.

The work will be conducted in phases, with each section measuring 50 metres. The vine removal and tree protection efforts are expected to be completed by mid-June, the bureau stated. ■

*Woodland stewardship refers to the responsible management and care of woodland areas to ensure their health, sustainability, and biodiversity for present and future generations. – DeepSeek

**The understory refers to the layer of vegetation in a forest or woodland that grows beneath the main canopy of trees but above the forest floor. – DeepSeek



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) on Friday shows part of the woodland at the Guia Hill Municipal Park affected by lianas.



Cheongsams on display at Albergue SCM

Rui Pastorin

A total of 16 cheongsams*, a tight-fitting Chinese formal woman’s dress, are on display at Albergue SCM’s Gallery A2 until March 16.

Albergue SCM** is located at Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷).

Organised by the CAC – Círculo dos Amigos da Cultura de Macau (“Circle of the Friends of Macau’s Culture”) and presented by the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), the exhibition is entitled “An Alluring Inheritance of Beauty: Chinese Cheongsam Exhibition” and features a variety of designs from different periods.

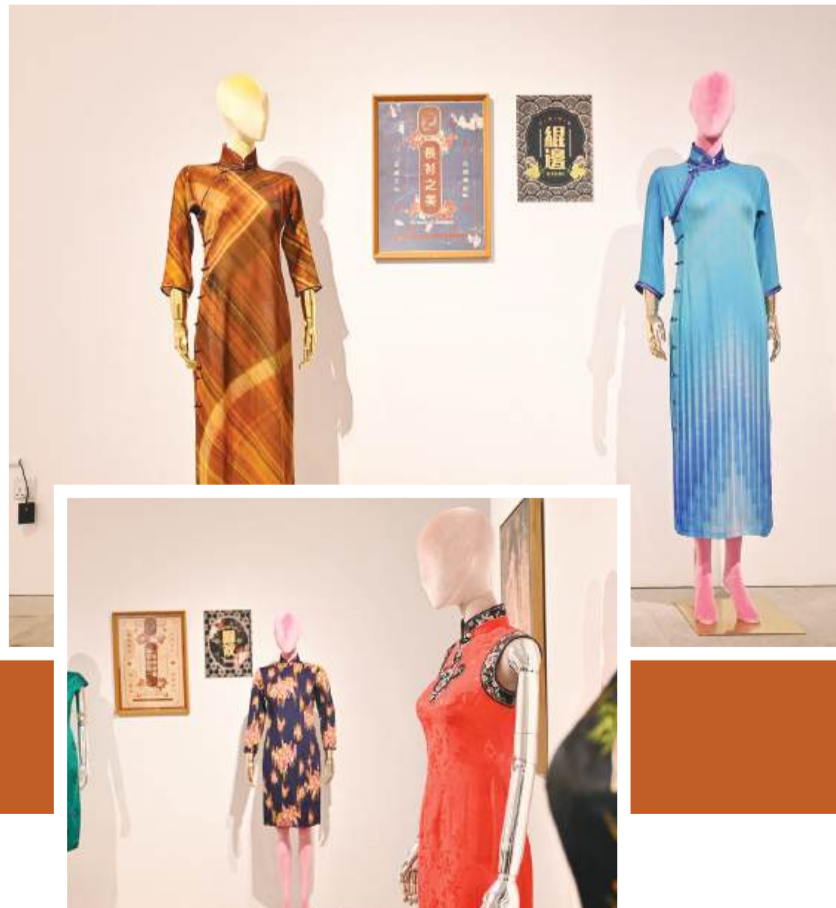
Among the exhibits are classic designs by traditional cheongsam master Ya Ka-man, along with modern interpretations, according to a statement on the CAC Facebook page. Aside from the physical exhibits, the cheongsams are also showcased virtually through projectors on screen, while one can also take part in the designated “Cheongsam Experience” spot for photo taking.

A statement displayed at the exhibition noted that with the “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” having been inscribed on The National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2021, the exhibition aims to inspire future generations to take “this alluring inheritance of the Chinese cheongsam to its next exciting and significant milestone.

Those interested in visiting the exhibition may do so from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Mondays and from noon to 8 p.m. the rest of the week.

*A cheongsam, also known as a qipao, is a traditional Chinese dress characterised by its fitted silhouette, high collar, and side slits. It is typically made from silk or other luxurious fabrics and often features intricate embroidery or patterns. – Source: Poe

**SCM stands for Santa Casa da Misericórdia (“Holy House of Mercy”), Macau’s oldest charitable organisation.



Photos: Rui Pastorin

Graeme McDowell to play at Int'l Series Macau presented by Wynn

Rui Pastorin

Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell is set to compete at the upcoming International Series Macau presented by Wynn, according to a recent statement by the organisers.

The Macau leg of the tournament is set to take place from March 20-23 at the Macau Golf and Country Club in Coloane, being the second of 10 stops on the Asia Tour calendar. It is part of The Open Qualifying Series, the statement said. Among the players recently confirmed are last year's winner John Catlin from the US, Fireballs GC captain Sergio Garcia from Spain and the US' Patrick Reed of 4Aces GC.

McDowell, the 2010 US Open champion and former Ryder Cup star will be joined by his Smash GC team-mate Jason Kokrak from the US, and Crushers GC player and seven-time winner on the Asian Tour Anirban Lahiri from India.

The statement added that other players set to enter are Legion XIII

player from the US Caleb Surratt, Danish golfer Frederik Kjettrup, the US's Peter Uihlein, Australia's Lucas Herbert, who placed third in last year's inaugural event, and his Ripper GC teammate Matt Jones.

Also entering are LIV Golf wild card Anthony Kim, a former Ryder Cup player, along with Majesticks GC Sam Horsfield, Stinger GC's Branden Grace and Torque GC's Sebastian Munoz, the statement said.

Head of The International Series Rahul Singh was quoted by the statement as saying: "With this year's edition of International Series Macau presented by Wynn being confirmed as a Qualifying Event for The Open, we have taken things to the next level. The addition of this world-class talent demonstrates the appeal of our series, and the opportunity that it is offering to players".

Tickets for the event's four-day run are free, with registration available via www.tixr.com ■



This undated handout photo downloaded from The International Series website last night shows Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell in action.

Italy-made 'ZOVIRAX IV INFUSION INJ 250MG' recalled: pharma bureau

Ginnie Liang

The Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) said in a statement on Friday that Batch No. RN3T of antiviral drug "ZOVIRAX IV INFUSION INJ 250MG", manufactured by Italy-based GlaxoSmithKline Limited has been recalled from the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre after being found to contain glass particles in one of its bottles.

The product is a prescription medication used to treat simple herpes and varicella shingles infections, the statement noted.

According to the information

provided by the importer, the affected batch of the drug was only supplied to the public hospital centre, and the bureau has instructed the importer to follow up on the recall.

According to the public hospital centre, it has immediately stopped using the affected batch of the drug, which is only for in-hospital use, and it has not received any reports of patients feeling unwell after using the drug, and will keep a close watch on the situation.

Residents who are in doubt can seek advice from their attending doctors or call the bureau on 8598 3233 during office hours. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) on Friday shows 'ZOVIRAX IV INFUSION INJ 250MG', produced by Italy-based GlaxoSmithKline Limited.

Temperature in spring to be normal to high, rainfall to be normal to low: SMG

Ginnie Liang

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) released its spring weather forecast on Friday, which predicts that the average temperature for March to May in Macau will be normal to high, and the cumulative rainfall will be normal to low, with the normal climate range for spring temperatures in Macau from 21.9°C to 22.6°C and rainfall ranging from 380 to 640 millimetres.

According to the local observatory, at the beginning of the spring season, Macau will be mainly affected by an easterly airflow after the surface cold high pressure comes out of the sea, adding that humid cloudy, rainy weather will often occur.

Afterwards, the cold high pressure will gradually weaken, the temperature will gradually pick up, and South China will be under the control of a trough of low pressure, while the precipitation activity will increase at the end of the spring season, i.e., starting from May, accompanied by thunderstorms, the observatory forecasts.

The bureau also said that the sea surface temperature in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean has been declining and is in a 'La Niña' state, adding that based on the combined model



This image provided by the Macau Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) on Friday shows its weather forecast for spring.

forecasts, it is predicted that the 'La Niña' state will gradually ease and there is a chance that it will return to the 'ENSO-neutral'* state by the end of spring.

According to Wikipedia, La Niña ("The Girl" in Spanish) is a complex weather pattern that occurs every few years, as a result of variations in ocean temperatures in the equatorial band of the Pacific Ocean. The phenomenon occurs as strong winds blow warm water at the ocean's surface away from South America, across the Pacific Ocean towards Indonesia.

In addition, the observatory issued a special weather bulletin yesterday saying a cold front was expected to arrive at the Guangdong

coast late tonight and early tomorrow, with sudden showers and possible thunderstorms.

Therefore, under the influence of a northeasterly monsoon, the temperature in Macau will drop and the northerly winds will intensify, with the temperature in Macau dropping to 13°C on Friday and Saturday, the observatory forecast. ■

* ENSO-neutral refers to a state in which there is neither an El Niño nor a La Niña event occurring in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. ENSO stands for El Niño-Southern Oscillation, a climate phenomenon that involves fluctuations in sea surface temperatures (SSTs) and atmospheric pressure in the tropical Pacific.

IAM to host 44th Macao Green Week from March 15-23

Adrian Vallesteros

The 44th Macao Green Week will be held from March 15 to 23 at various locations around the city, according to a statement by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), with this year's theme, "Passing on the love of nature to build a beautiful city together," aiming to promote environmental awareness and community involvement in greening efforts.

The statement noted that the festivities will kick off with a carnival on March 15 and 16 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Avenida da Praia in Taipa, with its opening ceremony scheduled for 3 p.m. Visitors can explore themed booths that provide information on tree species used in hillside restoration, the conservation of ancient trees, ornamental plants in local parks, and more. Moreover, interactive game booths, handicraft workshops, and guided eco-tours will be available to engage participants and spread messages of conservation and ecological responsibility, according to the statement.

During the Green Week, the statement said, residents will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of guided eco-tours and hands-on activities designed to showcase Macau's ecological



This undated file photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) on Friday shows participants taking part in an guided activity during a previous edition of the Macao Green Week.

resources and greening initiatives. A highlight will be the chance for the public to care for tree saplings planted in previous years, allowing them to witness the growth and importance of these natural resources.

The statement added that six "Green City - Plant Offering" activities will be organised across various districts, inviting members of the public to take greenery into their homes. To encourage participation, the fees for the Guia Hill cable car and the Hac Sá Off-

Roading Track for children's pedal go-karts will be waived during the event.

The week will culminate in the "Walking and Tree Conservation Activity" on March 23 at Seac Pai Van Park, where associations and community members can also look after the previously planted saplings.

More information can be found on www.iam.gov.mo or <https://nature.iam.gov.mo>. Enquiries can also be made by calling 2833 7676 or 2888 0087. ■

MUST industry-academia collaboration focuses on AI-based medical engineering

Tony Wong

MUST LIU's Innovation and Technology Centre, a facility for industry-academia-research collaboration jointly run by the private Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) and the local Liu's Commerce and Industry Limited, has presented three medical engineering projects that have transformed scientific achievements into practical applications, which the university says have injected new impetus into Macau's industrial diversification drive.

The industry-academia-research facility was established in October 2023, located in the premises of Liu's Commerce and Industry Limited situated in Coloane's Concórdia Industrial Park. The MUST campus is located in Taipa.

Liu's Commerce and Industry Limited (康澤工商有限公司) is owned by prominent local businessman Liu Chak Wan, who is also a co-founder and the chancellor of the university.

The facility is a cooperation project jointly launched by the university and the company, aiming to promote the transformation from the university's research achievements to the production of newly developed hi-tech products, thereby driving the development of the big health and high-tech industries under the local government's 1+4 appropriate economic diversification campaign.

The government's 1+4 model aims to consolidate and diversify the development of the city's tourism and leisure industry, i.e., the "1" element, while putting special emphasis on promoting the development of four new key industries, i.e., the "4" element, namely 1) big health mainly driven by traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), 2) modern finance, 3) high-tech, and 4) MICE and commerce as well as culture and sport.

MUST LIU's Innovation and Technology Centre held a session on Thursday on its premises to present the three medical engineering projects.

Interdisciplinary approach

Delivering a speech during Thursday's session, Chair Prof. Joseph Lee Hun-wei, the university's president and vice-chancellor, said that the centre is a base of the university for fostering innovation and promoting interdisciplinary research.

Prof. Lee underlined that the centre, which has been developing industry-academia-research collaboration based on an interdisciplinary approach, has made breakthrough achievements in cutting-edge fields such as medical engineering and artificial intelligence (AI).

Prof. Lee said he expects the centre's research achievements in medical engineering to be able to inject strong impetus into Macau's appropriate economic diversification



Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) President Joseph Lee Hun-wei (from left to right), Zhong Nanshan, an academican of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) President Che Weng Keong address Thursday's presentation session at MUST LIU's Innovation and Technology Centre in Coloane.



Guests try out the robotic TCM clinic after the session on Thursday.

- Photos: Tony Wong

drive, adding that the university will heed President Xi Jinping's various important instructions with the aim of supporting the local government in appropriately diversifying the city's economy.

Zhong Nanshan stresses technological transformation

Also delivering a speech, Zhong Nanshan, the nation's renowned medical expert, acknowledged the centre's research achievements in medical engineering.

Zhong said that nowadays the development of science and technology must comply with the greater integration between education, technological applications, and the training of highly qualified professionals.

Zhong, also an academican of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, underlined that the concept of scientific research has evolved where nowadays universities should place stronger emphasis on their ability to transform scientific research achievements into the successful development of new hi-tech products, a change from previously when universities put more effort in publishing scientific research papers in top academic journals.

Zhong also said that the integration between AI and medical engineering is expected to become a promising field in scientific and technological research.

Scientific innovation promoting economic diversification

Also delivering a speech, Che Weng Keong, president of the local government-run Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT), underlined the importance of scientific innovation in promoting Macau's appropriate economic diversification.

Che said that his fund is committed to providing subsidies targeting projects that are expected to be able to transform scientific research achievements into applications, with the aim of enabling scientific innovation to make greater contributions to the city's socioeconomic development.

Che praised the centre for overcoming the difficulties that hinder the transformation of scientific and technological achievements.

3 projects

The first project presented during the session was a robotic clinic for traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) that integrates intelligent robotic technology with different AI models including DeepSeek.

According to the presentation session, the one-stop machine is able to complete AI-based TCM diagnosis and brewing of respective health herbal tea in three to eight minutes.

The second project presented was a virus rapid testing kit with exception stability of its ceramic-encapsulated test reagents against light, water, oxygen, acids and alkalis so that they can be stored for several years.

The product's test strips can simultaneously test influenza A, B and COVID-19 with results generated in 5 to 10 minutes while providing accuracy similar to that of traditional testing methods.

The third project presented during the session was a newly developed teaching system that aims to inspire young people to develop their interest in both AI and life sciences. The science popularisation education system uses AI programming as a tool to integrate interdisciplinary knowledge of life sciences. ■

Streamlined procedures for evicting defaulting tenants start

Tony Wong

A new legal system making it easier for landlords to evict defaulting tenants has been in force since Saturday when an amended version of the Civil Procedures Code took effect.

Eviction rules listed in the Civil Procedures Code have been amended by a government-initiated bill passed by the legislature in October last year.

The newly amended code streamlines civil procedures aiming to enable landlords to evict tenants who refuse to pay their rent and to move out, within a shorter period of time than previously.

Before, the affected landlords were required to hire a lawyer for their civil procedures to evict defaulting tenants, while according to the streamlined civil procedures, which took effect on Saturday, it is not mandatory anymore for the landlords to hire a lawyer to tackle the issue.

The affected landlords are able to benefit from the newly streamlined procedures if the tenants are at least three months behind in paying their rents.

In order to benefit from the new procedures, the respective landlords are required to notify the tenants in writing about their failure to pay rent, according to the newly amended civil procedures on eviction.

Moreover, only landlords who receive their rent payments into a bank account are covered by the streamlined procedures.

If a defaulting tenant who has received an eviction notice issued by the court fails to move out within 15 days, the landlord can request a court-ordered eviction, after which the tenant must remove all his or her possessions from the flat within 15 days, otherwise the authorities will discard the items, according to the new system. ■

Hengqin MNN elderly canteen opens



This handout photo released by Hengqin's Livelihood Affairs Bureau on Saturday shows senior citizens having their lunch in the MNN neighbourhood's newly opened canteen on Friday.

Tony Wong

A community canteen for senior citizens opened on Friday in the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate on Zhuhai's Hengqin island, the Livelihood Affairs Bureau of the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has announced.

A statement by the bureau on Saturday said that the elderly canteen in the MNN neighbourhood is the sixth of its kind in Hengqin.

Elderly canteens across the mainland are welfare canteens dedicated to providing affordable and nutritious meals to senior citizens.

Normally, people of other ages can also eat at elderly canteens across the mainland but are required to pay the full price, while seniors are offered discounted prices.

According to Saturday's statement, the newly opened elderly canteen is located in the MNN neighbourhood's elderly service centre.

The statement said that a lunch there for senior citizens costs as little as three yuan (3.30 patacas).

In addition to shops, restaurants and other commercial outlets, the MNN neighbourhood

also includes community facilities comprising a school, a health station, a family and community service centre, and a service centre for senior citizens.

The MNN neighbourhood's health station, which opened in November last year, is run by the Macau Health Bureau (SSM).

Both the family and community service centre and the elderly service centre in the MNN neighbourhood started operating last year, run by the Macau Women's General Association (known as Fu Luen in Cantonese) and the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (known as Kai Fong in Cantonese) respectively.

Saturday's statement noted that while the new canteen in the MNN elderly service centre has been launched by the Livelihood Affairs Bureau, it is operated by Kai Fong's Guangdong branch office.

The statement also noted that the MNN elderly service centre's operation is subsidised by the Macau Social Welfare Bureau (IAS).

According to the statement, the new canteen started operating at 12 p.m. on Friday. ■

Western media's skepticism toward China's visa-free policy is misplaced

Analysis by Xinhua writer Chen Wangqi

BEIJING – As China moves forward with an unprecedented expansion of its unilateral visa-free policy, some Western media have rushed to downplay the significance of this effort for greater global openness.

In a recent report, Bloomberg called the visa-free policy a bid “falling flat” and “well short of the near full recovery Beijing would have been hoping for.” However, a closer look at China's latest efforts to advance its opening-up strategy reveals a different picture.

For more than a year, Beijing has expanded the policy to 38 countries, accommodating more entry purposes and extending the permitted stay to 30 days. And far from falling short, the unilateral visa-free policy has proven successful and stands as a key testament to China's determination to further integrate itself into the global economy.

“CHINA TRAVEL” BECOMES NEW TREND

Data from China's National Immigration Administration (NIA) showed that cross-border trips made by foreigners surged 82.9 percent from a year ago to 64.88 million in 2024. More than 20 million inbound foreign trips were made visa-free, a year-on-year increase of 112.3 percent.

China's comprehensive relaxation of visa requirements effectively pulled tourists to China last year, said Li Jun, a researcher at the Chinese

Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.

China's visa exemption policy started in December 2023, when it started piloting its unilateral visa-free policy for France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia. Now, it allows ordinary passport holders from 38 countries to visit the country for up to 30 days without a visa.

Fueled by the upgraded visa-free policy, “China Travel” went viral online, a trending social media hashtag with over 1 billion views as travelers shared their experiences in China. A growing number of international tourists are being drawn to the country's cultural landmarks, natural scenery and city tours.

Eva Gajewska, a project manager at CT Poland travel agency, said her office has seen a surge in inquiries since China announced the extension of its visa-free policy to Poland last June.

“Many new clients were drawn by the visa-free offer, which made planning their trips much easier,” she told Xinhua, adding that their China tour packages have already been booked through April.

During the past Spring Festival holiday, China welcomed more than 3.43 million inbound tourists from 175 countries and regions. Meanwhile, estimates by Chinese online travel agency Ctrip showed that the volume of travel bookings from foreign tourists to China

grew by 203 percent compared to the same period during last year's Chinese New Year.

Over 80 percent of people didn't leave China until the visa deadline was imminent, said Mao Xu, a senior NIA official.

Meanwhile, following the introduction of the new visa policy, many tourists have transitioned from first-time visitors to regular revisitors, broadening their travels from major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai to more off-the-beaten-path destinations.

“Waking up in a sleeper car and taking in the stunning views of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau was unforgettable,” said Belgian tourists Patrick, Luc and Ingrid, reflecting on their journey aboard the tourism train in China's Xizang Autonomous Region.

“The more we explore China, the more we're captivated by its allure,” they added. “Once you've been, you're eager to come back. We're excited to discover more and deepen our understanding of Chinese culture.”

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Far from being a “failure,” the policy has clearly spurred cross-border economic activity, as shown by the People's Bank of China's latest findings. During the 2024 Chinese New Year holiday, which ran from Jan. 28 to Feb. 4, international tourist transactions saw a dramatic rise.

The total number of cross-border transactions processed by China UnionPay and NetsUnion Clearing Corporation increased 124.54 percent, and the total transaction value grew 90.49 percent.

Critics in the West often overlook the policy's broader strategic benefits, particularly its role in regional branding and industrial advancement. As noted by Professor Chen Nan of China's Henan University, inbound tourism boosts both upstream and downstream industries, upgrades the market, enhances products and services and fosters innovation.

To be more specific, by simplifying the process for inbound tourists, the policy has invigorated interconnected sectors – from hospitality and retail to logistics and cultural services – driving innovation, improving service quality, and spurring demand for high-value, localized products.

These ripple effects, far from being limited to short-term tourism, are embedding long-term structural upgrades in China's consumption-driven economy.

In a sign of further financial opening, China has made mobile payments more accessible to foreigners. Travelers can now link Visa, Mastercard and other major credit cards to local platforms like Alipay and WeChat Pay.

Data from the People's Bank of China (PBOC) showed that this year's Chinese New Year holiday saw

a significant rise in transactions made by foreign visitors on WeChat, which surged by 134 percent compared to last year's Spring Festival. Meanwhile, spending through Alipay during the first five days of the holiday increased by 150 percent.

These figures reflect not only the convenience of mobile payments but also the growing enthusiasm of foreign tourists to purchase Chinese goods and immerse themselves in local culture.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, noted that inbound tourism not only boosts consumption in a country's tourism sector but also injects fresh energy into the broader market.

Its impact extends to enhancing infrastructure, public services and other key areas, creating a sustained, far-reaching momentum for growth, said Dai.

Shao Guanhua, deputy director of the Customs Policy Research Department at the General Administration of Customs, said that by streamlining visa processes, China has signaled an open and inclusive approach to the world.

Embracing the world with this openness, China is channeling its own growth to fuel global momentum, Shao said, adding that in doing so, it not only counters the rise of unilateralism but also underscores China's commitment to advancing globalization, offering renewed confidence in the global economic recovery. – Xinhua

Xinjiang moves to protect Gobi Desert with landmark regulation

URUMQI – Authorities in the northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region have introduced a new legal framework to safeguard the Gobi, a vital part of the desert ecosystem.

On Saturday, the city of Hami enacted Xinjiang's first local regulation aimed at protecting the Gobi Desert, marking a major step in the region's broader efforts to combat desertification through legal measures.

The new regulation requires that city and county governments in Hami develop a comprehensive ecological protection plan with clear conservation and restoration targets. It also mandates that construction, tourism, and commercial activities within the Gobi align with these guidelines to prevent environmental degradation, said Li Qiang, deputy head of the standing committee of the Hami people's congress.

Experts noted that the Gobi's gravel layer serves as a natural barrier against desertification. If disturbed, dormant dust sources could become active, intensifying sandstorms across the region.

The Gobi Desert in Hami covers 94,600 square km, accounting for about 66 percent of the city's total area, according to Hami's bureau of ecology and environment.

In August 2023, Hami launched an environmental project aimed at evaluating and restoring the Gobi Desert. Scientists from Nanjing City in east China collaborated on the initiative, which also helped advance the birth of the regulation.

Xinjiang has long prioritized environmental conservation. In late November, the Taklimakan, China's largest desert and the world's second-largest drifting desert, was completely encircled with a sand-blocking green belt stretching 3,046 km. – Xinhua



A girl poses for photos with a wall painting featuring the blockbuster animated fantasy adventure film “Ne Zha 2” in Dongfeng Village of Boxing County in Binzhou, Shandong Province, on Saturday.

– Xinhua

PLA aerobatic team to perform in Thailand for 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties

TIANJIN – The Bayi Aerobatic Team of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force departed for Thailand yesterday to participate in the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of China-Thailand

diplomatic relations.

The team's overseas mission, featuring an airshow of seven J-10 aircraft, highlights its return to Thailand after a decade and signifies the profound friendship between the air forces of both countries.

With mid-air refueling support from the YU-20, China's domestically developed large aerial tanker, the performance aircraft will fly non-stop to Bangkok, covering a distance of over 3,600 kilometers, said Li Bin, leader of the aerobatic team.

“To deliver a flawless performance, we have conducted on-site assessments of the Thai airfield, tailored our flight plan to the environment and carried out targeted training,” members of the team noted.

This mission is the 12th overseas flight demonstration by the aerobatic team. Established over 60 years ago, the team has performed more than 700 times for over 700 delegations across more than 170 countries and regions. – Xinhua