

Ding outlines 3 expectations for Macau NPC deputies in new era

Yuki Lei

Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang has commended the efforts of Macau 12 National People's Congress (NPC) deputies, urging them to fully support their chief executive and the special administrative region (SAR) government in governing in accordance with the law, while fostering a broad consensus among all sectors of the community, thereby jointly creating a new era of prosperity and development.

He also outlined three expectations for Macau's NPC deputies during the new era.

Ding made the remarks on Friday morning while attending a deliberation meeting of the Macau delegation at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), where he listened to suggestions from Macau NPC deputies on the central authorities' policies.

According to Xinhua, Ding emphasised the significant and far-reaching impact of President Xi Jinping's participation in the commemorative events celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and his visit to the SAR on December 18-20, saying that his visit "navigated the way for the future development of Hong Kong and Macau".

He conveyed the message that local NPC deputies should deeply study and implement the spirit of Xi Jinping's important speeches by embracing the crucial mission of practising the "One Country, Two Systems" principle in the new era, with the aim of making greater contributions to promoting the construction of a powerful country and achieving national rejuvenation, while also ensuring better development for Macau.



Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang (centre) attends Friday's deliberation meeting of the Macau delegation at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, flanked by Xia Baolong (right), who heads both the Hong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and Lao Ngai Leong.

— Photo: Xinhua

Underlining that this year is crucial for Macau's new government to make a strong start, Ding stressed the need to further enhance its institutional mechanism for safeguarding national security, calling for the participation of local NPC deputies in promoting the appropriate and diversified development of Macau's economy, effective implementation of the Macau-Hengqin integration, and the broad expansion of its international ties to

establish a higher level of openness to the outside world.

"Over the past year, under the strong leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China with comrade Xi Jinping at its core, and with the collective efforts of people from all ethnic groups in the country, Chinese-style modernisation has made significant progress, and new breakthroughs have been achieved in the

cause of 'One Country, Two Systems'," said Ding, as quoted by Xinhua.

Ding outlined, according to multiple local news reports, three expectations to Macau NPC deputies: first, to promote the spirit of the "two sessions"; second, to support the new SAR government and its new team to govern in accordance with the law; and, third, to unite various sectors of the community.

Continued on p.2

Iran says mulls limited nuclear talks with US

WASHINGTON – Iran said yesterday it would consider nuclear negotiations with the United States, but only as they pertained to external concerns of the "potential militarisation" of the programme – rather than a total shutdown.

The post on X by Iran's mission to the United Nations came a day after the country's supreme leader slammed what he described as "bullying" tactics insisting on negotiations, after US President Donald Trump threatened military action.

"If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-a-vis any potential militarisation of Iran's nuclear programme, such discussions may be subject to consideration," the post said.

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme to claim that what Obama failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," it continued.

— AFP

Israel cuts off electricity supply to Gaza, demanding hostage release

JERUSALEM – Israel announced yesterday that it was halting the electricity supply to the Gaza Strip to pressure Hamas into releasing hostages.

"I have just signed an order to immediately stop the supply of electricity to Gaza," Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen said in a video statement.

Cohen stated the measure aims to pressure Hamas to release its hostages still held in Gaza. According to Israeli figures, 59 hostages remain in Hamas captivity, around 24 of whom are believed to be alive.

"We will employ all available means to ensure the return of all hostages and guarantee that Hamas will not be in Gaza the day after [the war]," Cohen added.

In a letter released publicly, Cohen instructed the state-owned Israel Electric Corporation to "cease the sale of electricity to Gaza." A spokesperson for Cohen said the order will become effective "immediately."

Israel has blocked aid shipments, including food, into Gaza since March 2, after the first 42-day phase

of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire expired.

To see through the implementation of the three-phase ceasefire, Hamas officials have been in talks with Egyptian and US officials, while an Israeli delegation is expected to depart for Doha today to continue negotiations.

In the first days of its onslaught in Gaza since October 2023, Israel had cut off electricity, food, medicine, and fuel supplies to Gaza, creating famine and a "catastrophic" humanitarian crisis in the enclave, according to the United Nations.

— AFP

Macau's most popular English-language newspaper – Your trustworthy source of news & views

The Macau Post Daily

China reaffirms commitment to reform, opening up at 'two sessions'

Those keen to understand the trajectory and focus of the world's second-largest economy will find a recurring theme at China's "two sessions" this year – reform and opening up.

— Story on p. 7

Greenland's Inuits rediscover their national pride

With her colourful Inuit earrings and tattoos on prominent display, Ujammiugaq Engell, like many Greenlanders, flaunts her rediscovered cultural identity, which US President Donald Trump's expansionist ambitions have only spurred further.

— Story on p. 11

Guinea-Bissau leader advances elections to Nov 23

Guinea Bissau's president on Friday brought forward the date for presidential and legislative elections to November 23, after convening political parties to try to end a crisis over the vote.

— Story on p. 12

JC chief calls for youth participation in sports economy

Yuki Lei

The Hou Kong Junior Chamber (JC) held a press conference yesterday on its “2025 Campaign”, on the sidelines of which President Elvis Pascal Chao told the media that his group will place special emphasis on the sports economy this year, calling for the participation of local youths and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with a view to contributing to the appropriately diversified development of Macau’s economy.

The press conference took place on the premises of the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations.

Chao said: “Over the past few years, we’ve received positive feedback indicating that young people remain enthusiastic about entrepreneurship. We have implemented various projects in areas such as big health, financial technology [fintech], and artificial intelligence [AI], with high participation rates. This year, we aim to create more opportunities in the sports sector, allowing young people from diverse fields to explore avenues for development”.

According to Chao, his group is scheduled to hold a forum in June, inviting guests from the mainland’s sports industry, who are more

mature than their local counterparts, to tell them about their experiences, “hoping that representatives from the government and various sectors of the community will also participate to inspire young people’s thinking”.

He added: “In addition to the common cultural and creative products presently available, there are many sectors involved in planning sporting activities, including exploring potential connections between performing arts and sport, as well as the possibility of a large-scale fan economy that allows various SMEs and industries to participate. This is something we all anticipate and hope to achieve”.

This year, the group’s activity plan will encompass four major areas of development, namely, international, business, social, and personal professional development, in which a raft of activities in collaboration with their counterparts in Japan will be held to celebrate the



Hou Kong Junior Chamber President Elvis Pascal Chao delivers a speech during yesterday’s press conference on the premises of the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations in Toi San district. – Photo: Yuki Lei

35th anniversary of their alliance, alongside the 20th Anniversary of Macau becoming a World Heritage Site, Chao said, adding that the activities will include a visit to

the tourism office in Himeji of Japan, participation in the Himeji Castle Festival, a visit to the Osaka World Expo in Kansai, and design competitions, among others. ■

‘Light up Macao’ logs nearly 4.9 million spectators

Rui Pastorin

The citywide “Light Up Macao” ended its 84-day run on February 28, with the event registering close to 4.9 million spectators visiting the installations and mapping show venues across six districts, according to a Friday statement from the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The statement noted that the statistics came from mobile data provided by local telecommunication companies.

The event kicked-off on December 7 last year and featured six sub-themes in six districts across the peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. The main theme this year, meanwhile, was “Symphony of Time and Space”.

MGTO, the statement noted, invited artists and design teams from eight UNESCO Creative Cities of Design: Beijing,

Shanghai, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Nagoya (Japan), Ciudad de México (Mexico), Montreal (Canada) and Sydney (Australia), as well as Macau, Hong Kong, Portugal, and New Zealand.

This year’s Light Up Macao featured 23 locations, complete with 31 installations comprising six flagship installations, four art installations, 12 light installations and nine interactive installations. There were also three themed mapping shows, which had a total of 1,008 sessions, along with 66 pop-up sessions.

The statement added that a “wide promotional campaign” was held for the event across MGTO’s social media platforms, while key opinion leaders (KOLs) from Macau, the mainland, and elsewhere were also invited. Over 154 million “impressions” were garnered, according to the statement. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) shows children playing at one of the Light Up Macao installations.

8^{1/2} Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA welcomes Executive Chef Marino D’Antonio

Rui Pastorin

8^{1/2} Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA at Galaxy Macau has welcomed its new Executive Chef Marino D’Antonio, an Italian chef acclaimed for his exceptional culinary talent in various Michelin-starred establishments and five-star hotels, according to a recent statement from the integrated resort operator.

The restaurant has garnered accolades including a Michelin one-star rating for nine consecutive years and a Forbes Travel Guide five-star rating for three years running since it opened in 2015, the statement noted.

Dinner events featuring seasonal ingredients were hosted on February 26 and 27, during which Italian chef Umberto Bombana made a special appearance and collaborated with the new chef in hosting the dinner.

The statement said that Chef Marino comes from a family of cooks and embarked on his culinary adventure in China in 2006. He partnered with chef Bombana in 2013 to open Opera BOMBANA, which

“became the hottest Italian restaurant in Beijing”, the statement said.

The statement added that chef Marino has, over the past two decades, opened many successful restaurants across China and authored two culinary books.

“Chef Marino has big ambitions for 8^{1/2} Otto e Mezzo* BOMBANA and looks forward to introducing his own signature dishes to diners in Macau”, the statement said.

The statement added that a new lunch menu featuring Michelin-quality cuisine is available on Fridays and Saturdays and showcases “Italian classics paired with fresh seasonal ingredients to ensure a high-quality culinary experience in a short timeframe”. ■

*8^{1/2} (often written as “8½”) is an Italian film directed by Federico Fellini, released in 1963. The title “Otto e Mezzo” translates to “Eight and a Half” in English. The title refers to the fact that this was Fellini’s eighth and a half film, considering his previous works, including collaborations and short films. – DeepSeek



This undated handout photo recently provided by Galaxy Macau shows Chef Marino D’Antonio posing.

Ding outlines 3 expectations for Macau NPC deputies in new era

Continued from p.1

The annual sessions of the NPC and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee are collectively known as the “two sessions”.

Friday’s deliberation meeting was presided over by the leader of the Macau NPC deputies Lao Ngai Leong. During the meeting, six fellow deputies, namely José Chui Sai Peng, Ng Sio Lai, Si Ka Lon, Chen Hong, and Vong Hin Fai, presented their suggestions in several areas,

including promoting convergence between Macau and the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin; supporting the innovative development of basic education in the zone; assisting Macau’s legal practitioners in creating a platform for the nation’s higher-level opening to the outside world; integrating Macau’s elderly service system into the zone; maximising Macau’s role in “linking up with the inside and the outside world”; and compiling a series of books on

the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”.

Meanwhile, Macau’s five portfolio policy secretaries and other senior officials promised in separate statements on Saturday that they will thoroughly study the spirit of the “two sessions”, including the important speeches by President Xi and the Central People’s Government work report delivered during the concurrent NPC and CPPCC National Committee sessions slated to end in Beijing this week. ■

Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
- Office Manager – Sally Chong
- Marketing Manager – Kevin Cheung King Lok
- Managing Editor – Maria Cheung Ut Meng
- Editors – Lesley Wells, Johnny Un
- Senior Reporter – Tony Wong
- Reporters – Rui Pastorin, Yuki Lei, Ginnie Liang, William Chan, Ada Lei
- Chief Graphic Designer – Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer – Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua
- Chatbots: Poe, DeepSeek

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 2 TO 4 EASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



16°C~23°C

Source: SMG

80 pct of females' incomes unchanged: survey

Yuki Lei

The findings of the new annual survey on women's living and employment conditions, co-conducted by the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (Gung Luen), show that nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that their incomes have remained unchanged during Macau's economic recovery, an increase of 20 percentage points compared to last year's survey, with more than 60 percent of the respondents saying that their families have not been able to benefit from the economic recovery.

"The employment environment has not improved after the three-year COVID-19 pandemic [2020-2022]," the survey's findings quoted respondents as saying, noting that their incomes have even decreased. Among the respondents, nearly 90 percent said they hoped that the government would introduce a new round of financial assistance and other measures to protect local employment, including an increase in paid holidays and more opportunities for female employment and career development.

The 2025 survey on Women's Living and Employment Conditions was conducted in the first two months of the year, during which 970 valid questionnaires were collected from local women aged 18 or above. About 70 percent of the respondents said they were employed, with the highest proportion working in the education sector, followed closely by the entertainment and gaming sector, medical and health sector,



Representatives from the co-conductors of the "2025 survey on Women's Living and Employment Conditions", including Macau Federation of Trade Unions (Gung Luen) Vice President Ella Lei Cheng I (second from left), a directly-elected lawmaker, release their survey findings during Friday's press conference on the Gung Luen premises. — Photo courtesy of TDM

and social welfare sector. Another 73 percent of the respondents said they were "very" or "relatively" worried about their job prospects.

The findings show that 68 percent of respondents consider life stressful or very stressful, quoting them as saying that finances were their main source of stress, with major expenses arising from daily spending on food and beverages, utilities, childcare, transport, medical care, and mortgage payments.

Referring back to the findings of last year's survey, only 55 percent of the respondents then reported experiencing financial pressure. Additionally, about 80 percent of the respondents expressed the hope that the government would introduce financial assistance and other support measures amid the city's economic recovery.

This year's report points out that, summarising the respondents' feedback, the other sources of stress include caring for children or

the elderly, health conditions, and family relationships.

The findings reveal that the respondents agree that the most effective policies to encourage childbearing include extending maternity leave from 70 to 90 days, increasing maternity allowances, introducing childcare subsidies, and providing bonus points for social housing allocation. The respondents also expected, according to the findings, the government to implement specific policies related to women, including improving medical protection, paying special attention to children's education and youth development, as well as increasing support for children's education, and improving the city's social and retirement protection systems.

According to a statement provided by the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (commonly known as Gung Luen in Cantonese) to the *Post* yesterday, directly-elected lawmaker-cum-unionist Ella Lei Cheng I pointed

out that many women have expressed concerns about the re-employment challenges faced by previously full-time mothers, as well as difficulties for middle-aged women. She suggested that the government closely monitor residents' financial pressure and enhance various measures to benefit the community, such as its annual wealth-sharing handout scheme, consumer vouchers, water and electricity subsidies, and medical vouchers, also emphasising the need to improve local employment

opportunities through training and incentives, making the protection of local residents' employment a long-term priority by formulating recruitment and promotion indicators for local talents showing potential for working in certain industries, while launching diversified training programmes to facilitate the career development of employees, females in particular.

The findings were released by the federation at press conference on its premises on Friday.

Lei also called on the government to actively study the feasibility of gradually increasing the number of maternity leave days in a targeted manner, as well as to review the upward adjustment of a number of paid leave days for employees under the city's Labour Relations Law.

According to the latest official demographics, 53.7 percent of Macau's population of 688,300 was female at the end of last year. The population figure includes non-resident workers (NRWs) living in Macau. ■

IC calls for article submissions for Review of Culture

Rui Pastorin

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) is calling for submissions of articles by scholars and specialists at the national and international level for this edition of the Review of Culture (RC), which is this time centred on the historical and cultural research related to "Culture City of East Asia 2025 – Macao, China", the bureau said in a statement on Friday.

Submissions can be made until

April 30, the statement noted, adding that the manuscripts can be in Chinese, Portuguese or English.

The statement said that the related research topics include, but are not limited to, the historical and cultural ties between Macau and East Asian regions and countries, Macau's role and contributions to cultural exchanges within the region, and the distinct East Asian characteristics embedded in

Macau's multicultural heritage.

Submissions, according to the statement, can be made to cms.rc@um.edu.mo. After an anonymous review, the accepted articles are slated to be published in this year's edition.

Submission guidelines and formatting requirements can be found at www.icm.gov.mo/rc or by emailing the editorial office at cms.rc@um.edu.mo. ■

CTT to offer postmark cancellation service for 'World Forest Day'

Rui Pastorin

The Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) said in a statement on Friday that commemorative postmark cancellation services for "World Forest Day"* will be available at a temporary post counter in the main post office in Largo do Senado on March 21.

According to the statement, the temporary post counter will be set up from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The statement noted that commemorative envelopes will also be distributed to members of the public, while philatelic products will be sold, the statement said.

*Established by the United Nations (UN), world forest day is internationally known as the International Day of Forests (IDF) and is annually observed on March 21. It is aimed towards raising "awareness about the importance of forests and trees in sustaining life on Earth" and focuses on themes related to forests. —Source: Poe



This image provided by the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) shows the Commemorative Envelope of "World Forest Day".

Angled parking for motorbikes to be set up on Rua de Santa Clara



This undated handout photo, provided by the Transport Bureau (DSAT) on Friday, shows the newly set-up angled parking spaces for motorbikes on Rua de Santa Clara.

Yuki Lei

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has been working on improving the street parking spaces for motorbikes and cars in various local districts by phases, in which the motorcycle parking spaces on the side of Rua de Santa Clara (家辣堂街), near the Octagonal Library Pavilion, have meanwhile been converted from straight to angled spaces.*

According to a DSAT statement on Friday, the bureau is gradually converting existing motorbike parking spaces into angled parking, subject to certain conditions. Rua de Santa Clara will be the first pilot site for this year's adjustments, with an expected 90 angled parking spaces for motorcycles becoming available soon.

In the next phase of adjustments, the statement noted, more angled parking spaces for motorbikes will be provided on the side of Jardim de S. Francisco (加思欄花園), followed by the

lengthening of the 23 metered parking spaces for cars to an average of 5.5 metres, both of which are expected to become available late this month.

The bureau stated that the adjustments were initiated after considering the views of various road stakeholders, including community groups and advisory organisations, as well as assessing factors such as road conditions and pedestrian and traffic safety, adding it expected more than 2,000 motorbike parking spaces to be converted into angled parking by the end of this year.

The bureau also pledged that in future, priority will also be given to installing angled parking racks in narrower areas. ■

*Angled parking spaces are an alternative design in car parks and streets, where vehicles park at an angle rather than parallel or perpendicular to the kerb or parking lane. —DeepSeek

ABOUT The Young Post

The Macau Post Daily's The Young Post will be published every Monday to present and discuss topical issues that may interest not only the younger but also all the other generations.

ENTREPRENEUR EDITION

Brewing Success: inspiring journey of ColleXtives Café

Interview and review by Adrian Vallesteros

In the heart of Macau, ColleXtives Café stands out not just for its unique atmosphere but also for the inspiring story of its founders, Maria Isabela Brosas Faustino and Kara Kathrina Gasque Cenon. Both co-founders told the *Post* their story in a recent interview at their café, which blends specialty coffee and dishes with community engagement, born from a vision of collaboration rather than competition.

A vision born from collaboration & embracing Filipino culture

Faustino emphasised the significance of their name: "The X in ColleXtives, situated on Avenida de Sidónio Pais (士多鳥拜斯大馬路), symbolises collaboration." Initially, the duo operated with their own separate brands, each offering unique products. However, they realised their combined strengths could create a space that celebrates both their Macau and Filipino roots while fostering a sense of community.

Faustino elaborated on their mission to redefine the business landscape, saying: "We came together to collaborate and wanted to show that it's also possible for others. When you start a business together, people often think it's very competitive and that there's not much support. But we wanted to change that." This collaborative spirit is central to their journey, encouraging others to embrace teamwork.

A significant aspect of ColleXtives Café is its celebration of Filipino culture. "We found out that that was our specialty," Cenon noted, highlighting the importance they feel for this subject. Both entrepreneurs,

who were both born in Macau, focus on incorporating Filipino flavours into their offerings. Their menu includes items that blend Filipino ingredients with their lattes and vegan adaptations of traditional dishes. "We want to make it seem like it's not impossible to actually go plant-based if you really want to," said Cenon.

Building community through creativity

ColleXtives Café is more than just a place to grab a coffee, it's a community hub. Faustino and Cenon are dedicated to fostering creativity and collaboration among local artists and small businesses. They spoke about their passion for helping those who are just starting out. "I mean if you come from it, you understand the struggles," Cenon emphasised, reflecting on their own entrepreneurial challenges. Their experiences motivate them to create opportunities for those who may feel intimidated by the business landscape.

The café regularly hosts collaborative events, providing a platform for emerging talents, with Faustino adding: "Even though our space is small, we do as much as we can to support small businesses".

The challenges of entrepreneurs

Of course, an entrepreneur's journey isn't without hardships. With just the two of them running the business, both Cenon and Faustino have faced a multitude of challenges, with one being the fact that they handle everything themselves. Faustino stated: "Staffing-wise, we just manage everything. So, it's really hard to have an extra hand." They both said that to people, on the surface, their work simply appears to consist of just making drinks and



cooking food. However, Cenon pointed out that the reality is they "probably do more like 10 jobs each." She further explained: "It's a lot more than we realised until we got into it", with things ranging from paper work, finances, government regulations, and menu development.

Another struggle that they face is from the events and collaborations that they organise. According to Cenon, "people don't realise how much time and effort goes into not only the events alone, but also the daily work." They stressed that due to the nature of their collaborative and community-based business, it is necessary to adjust to the availability of the artists that they work with or for the people they provide services for. At times, the duo work long, tiring hours – once it reached 21 hours in a single day.

Staying positive amidst struggles

Despite these hurdles, Cenon and Faustino maintain a positive outlook throughout their entrepreneurial journey. They emphasised the necessity of staying optimistic, as challenges are a constant part of running a business. "We just deal with it day by day,"

Cenon said, noting how her initial tendency to plan everything meticulously shifted once they started the café. Faustino underscores the importance of accepting situations rather than getting stressed over them, adopting a proactive approach: "We try to convert our energy to what we can do to solve the problem," adding: "and it's always good problems, right?"

Their resilience is evident in how they tackle these challenges. "You have to be mentally and emotionally prepared,"

Faustino advised, underscoring the importance of perseverance. For both of them, maintaining a positive mindset is essential in navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship, allowing them to push forward despite the difficulties they encounter.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs

As multicultural entrepreneurs, both founders offer valuable advice to younger, aspiring entrepreneurs eager to follow in their footsteps. "Just go for it," Faustino encourages. "If it feels right for you and you know you want to do it, just go for it." This straightforward approach resonates with their own journey, emphasising the importance of taking that first step. Cenon echoed this sentiment, reinforcing the reality of entrepreneurship: "No matter how much financial help you have, no matter how much guidance you have from older people who own businesses already, you're going to face problems that only you will have."

Moreover, Cenon stressed the importance of commitment: "You have to be not only 100 percent, but 110 percent sure." This high level of dedication is crucial, especially in the early stages of a business, where perseverance can make all the difference, according to the young entrepreneurs.

They encourage budding entrepreneurs to embrace their creativity and not fear failure. "Just be prepared. Expect the unexpected," Cenon advised, highlighting that the entrepreneurial journey is unpredictable. Their experiences show that while challenges are inevitable, maintaining a positive attitude and a proactive mindset can help navigate those difficulties effectively.

The café is open from Monday to Saturday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.



This photo recently provided by ColleXtives shows co-founders Kara Kathrina Gasque Cenon (right) and Maria Isabela Brosas Faustino

– Photos recently provided by ColleXtives

Govt underlines MSAR's 25-year achievements in women's development

Tony Wong

The Macau government has pledged to constantly promote women's development and participation in various aspects in civil society through various policies and measures, aiming to empower women and build a society of equality and inclusion.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) laid out various achievements Macau has made in advancing women's development and promoting higher gender equality since its return to the motherland in December 1999, in a statement on Friday night, on the eve of International Women's Day.

The statement underlined that since Macau's return to the motherland, the "One Country, Two Systems" principle has been implemented effectively in Macau, its economy has been developing, civil society has been advancing, people's civic awareness has been rising, and social welfare services for women and children have been improving. The local government has been actively implementing and improving various policies and measures for promoting the population's well-being, ensuring the protection of women's access to healthcare, education, employment, social security and welfare benefits, thereby laying a solid foundation for women's development and steadily enhancing their status, the statement said.

The Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) was established on December 20, 1999.

In terms of healthcare, the statement said, the MSAR government is providing free primary healthcare for local residents,

general and specialised nursing care for pregnant women, and free medical care for women during their childbirth hospitalisation, adding that the city's maternal mortality rate has remained at a low level for over a decade.

The statement noted that the life expectancy of women in Macau rose from 80.5 years in 1999 to 86.1 years last year, with women's life expectancy being higher than that of men, adding that Macau's life expectancy currently ranks among the top in the world.

The statement said that over the past 25 years, Macau residents' longevity has increased significantly while their health levels have also improved, thanks to the city's comprehensive healthcare system and the extensive coverage of its medical welfare policies.

In the field of education, the statement said that since Macau's return to the motherland, compulsory and free universal education has been implemented, with 15-year free education having been launched, ensuring equal opportunity for education for both genders.

The statement noted that in the 2023/2024 academic year, secondary school graduates' university enrolment rate for females was 97.5 percent, 0.5 percentage points higher than that for males. The proportion of women with higher education qualifications increased from 6.1 percent in 2001 to 30.6 percent in 2021, a rise of 24.5 percentage points over 20 years, thereby establishing a better foundation for women's personal development and promoting their upward mobility.

Regarding employment, the statement said that with Macau's level of education among women



This file photo released by the Sports Bureau (ID) shows participants in the 2024 Macau Women's Sports Carnival last year.

increasing and its implementation of family-friendly childcare policies, women's labour force participation rate increased from 56.1 percent in 1999 to 65.2 percent in 2023, an increase of 9.1 percentage points, while women's gap with men in the labour force participation rate dropped from 20.3 percentage points to 6.0 percentage points during the period.

According to the statement, Macau residents' wage gap between the two genders stood at two percent in 2023, lower than the average among OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member countries and similar to the average among the Nordic countries, demonstrating that women's rights and opportunities for equal participation in economic development are fully protected in Macau, the statement said.

In terms of participation in public administration, the statement said, females accounted for 44.9 percent of all public servants, 40.7 percent of senior officials of the government's

bureaus and other bureau-level entities and 51.3 percent of all judges and prosecutors, adding that three of the nine principal officials of the current, sixth-term MSAR government are females, accounting for one-third of the total.

The data shows that women in Macau have equal opportunities with their male counterparts for employment in the civil service and for political appointments, the statement said.

Childcare improvements

Moreover, the statement said, the number of places for childcare services for those under the age of three available in Macau currently covers over 60 percent of the total number of children in this age group, significantly higher than the average enrolment rate in childcare facilities among OECD member countries.

The statement underlined that the MSAR government's childcare policies and measures to support parents cover all children under the age of three, including newborns,

meeting the diverse needs of different families for childcare, thereby reducing the stress on women caring for their children and creating favourable conditions for women pursuing career development.

The statement noted that according to the findings of a research report compiled by the Social Welfare Bureau, Macau's Gender Gap Index (GGI) ranked 51st globally in 2021, while its Gender Inequality Index (GII) ranked seventh globally, indicating that Macau enjoys a relatively high level of gender equality.

Legislative progress

In addition, the statement underlined, the MSAR government has paid attention to women's diverse development needs. With the aim of ensuring better protection of women's rights, benefits and well-being, the statement said, the government has drafted different pieces of legislation – which were passed by the legislature respectively – such as the current social security system implemented since 2011 allowing housewives to also join the system and pay their dues, the Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence enacted in 2016, and amendments to the Penal Code adding a new criminal category of sexual harassment enacted in 2017.

The legislation also included amendments to the Labour Relations Law enacted in 2020 raising the number of days for statutory paid maternity leave to 70 days from 56 days in the private sector while also entitling new fathers employed in the private sector to five days of paid paternity leave, the statement noted. ■

Man steals smartphone from student's bag

Staff Reporter

The police arrested a man from the mainland last week for stealing a smartphone from a female student's bag on the campus of a university in Taipa late last month, a Public Security Police (PSP) spokesperson said during a regular press conference on Friday.

The man surnamed Zhou in his forties told the police that he works as a salesman in the mainland.

According to the spokesperson, the student in her twenties, who is also from the mainland, left her bag at a sports complex on the university's campus on February 28, but when she returned to pick it up 40 minutes later, she found that her smartphone worth 9,000 yuan (9,958 patacas) had disappeared from the bag and reported the case to the police.

After scrutinising the university's CCTV footage and the police forces' citywide CCTV camera system, PSP officers identified Zhou as the suspected thief, who was intercepted on Wednesday last week when he

re-entered Macau through the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal.

The spokesperson said that under questioning, Zhou, however, refused to cooperate, but the police decided to transfer him to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) after considering that there existed strong circumstantial evidence that he had stolen the smartphone. ■



This undated handout photo released by the Public Security Police (PSP) on Friday shows two police officers escorting the theft suspect to a police station in Taipa.

IAM urges public to stop drinking locally produced bottled drinking water containing coliform

Ginnie Liang

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) said in a statement on Friday that a locally produced bottled drinking water under the brand of "Ice Blue (冰藍)" was found to contain excessive level of coliform, urging members of the public to stop drinking the water and warning all suppliers and retailers to cease selling it.

The product's manufacturer, "愛高普飲料廠", which is located at Industrial Building "Chun Foc" on Avenida de Venceslau de Morais (慕拉士大馬路201號泉福工業大廈), was ordered to remove its 18.9 litre bottled drinking water products, that have a production date of 2025/02/25 from retailers' shelves as a precaution, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, the manufacturer

was also ordered to carry out thorough cleansing, disinfection and a second sampling review of the production line, the statement said, adding that the bureau also urged members of the public to stop consuming and supplying the affected products if in their possession, in order to ensure food safety.

According to the statement, coliform bacteria can come from faecal contamination or from the environment and are used as an indicator organism for drinking water hygiene, the statement said, adding that the presence of coliforms in the product may be due to improper disinfection or poor processing and environmental hygiene.

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



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) on Friday shows the problematic locally made "Ice Blue (冰藍)" 18.9 litre bottle of drinking water manufactured by "愛高普飲料廠".

Fu Luen leads Macau delegation to UN in NY

Staff reporter

A 12-member delegation from the Women's General Association of Macau (commonly known as Fu Luen in Cantonese) flew to New York from Hong Kong early Saturday morning to participate in the 69th Session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), with the aim of showcasing Macau's progress in women's rights and contribute to the 30th-Anniversary review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

A statement provided by Fu Luen yesterday stated that, with the aim of playing a key role in global discussions regarding advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the CSW69 will be held at the UN Headquarters from today to March 21, comprising young



Representatives from the Women's General Association of Macau (commonly known as Fu Luen in Cantonese) pose before flying to New York to participate in the 69th Session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) early Saturday morning at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA).

representatives from Fu Luen and the Association of International Affairs Exchange and Training of Macau.

Delegation leader Cheong Kin Na, president of the Association of International Affairs Exchange and

Training of Macao, the delegation will host parallel events in New York and Macau, with the New

York's event titled "Resilience and Transformation: The Path to Gender Equality and Empowerment in Macao Since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," which will take place tomorrow, while the corresponding event in Macau on March 18 will connect virtually with the UN, fostering cross-border dialogue, according to the statement.

The statement went on to say that a highlight of the delegation's participation, according to the statement, is its involvement in the Artisan Fair, where they will exhibit cultural art created by Macau's young and elderly women, celebrating Macau's unique blend of Chinese and multicultural influences, showcasing the entrepreneurial spirit of Macau women and promoting global cultural exchange. ■

Health Bureau launches reminder service for women covered by cervical cancer screening

Ginnie Liang

The Health Bureau (SSM) launched a new programme on Saturday to remind female residents to undergo their cervical cancer screening, where participants will be reminded via phone calls, according to an SSM statement on Friday.

Eligible residents, those who are aged between 21 and 65, can enrol in the programme through the "Macao One Account" mobile app or in person at the city's 14 screening service locations, the statement said.

Cervical cancer is a common and life-threatening malignancy among women worldwide, the statement said, adding that the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends early detection, early diagnosis and early treatment through HPV vaccination before the age of 15, regular screening and appropriate treatment of precancerous lesions or

cervical cancer, so as to reduce the incidence and mortality rates.

However, factors such as busy urban life often make women of the relevant age group neglect or forget to undergo regular screening, hence the launch of the programme, the statement pointed out.

Areia Preta Health Centre Chief Chou Mei Fong said in a media interview yesterday that more than 18,000 people participated in the cervical cancer screening programme in Macau last year, and that the median age of women receiving screening for the first time in Macau in the past 10 years was 44, which she considered to be late.

Chou also pointed out that many women overlooked the importance of screening, and that the proportion of young and middle-aged women taking part in the programme was on the decline.



This poster provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) on Friday urges eligible female residents to undergo cervical cancer screening.

Interested individuals can call the bureau through its hotline during office hours on 2831 3731 or email the bureau at info@ssm.gov.mo. ■

Legionnaires' disease does not spread through food & drink: Health Bureau

Ginnie Liang

The Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement yesterday that Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person or through food and drink, and that the risk of transmission in hospitals is low, following a 71-year-old local man's diagnosis of having Legionnaires' disease on February 27, after his stay at the private Kiang Wu Hospital between February 7 and 18.

Kiang Wu Hospital was quoted by the SSM statement as saying that medical surveillance of inpatients and staff had been initiated and there was no indication of further cases or intra-hospital transmission so far, the statement said, adding that the hospital has suspended the use of showers by patients to reduce the possibility of inhaling bacteria in the fine spray, and will deep-clean and disinfect the hospital's water supply system.

Leong Iek Hou, who heads the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Division of the Health Bureau, said during a local media interview yesterday that Kiang Wu Hospital was closely monitoring the health condition of its patients and

providing them with appropriate treatment.

Leong added that Legionnaires' Disease is mainly caused by inhalation of contaminated mist from artificial water systems that is particularly dangerous to high-risk groups such as men, the elderly, smokers or alcoholics, especially those with low immunity, adding that exposure to Legionella bacteria may cause illness, which may lead to pneumonia or even death.

Leong called on members of the public to pay special attention to strengthening their resistance in daily life, using properly designed water supply systems, as well as ensuring regular maintenance of domestic water filters and replacement of shower heads. She also urged the public to pay special attention to the maintenance of their water supply systems.

According to a statement, Legionnaires' disease, also known as legionellosis, is a form of atypical pneumonia caused by any type of Legionella bacteria, with signs and symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, high fever, muscle pain, and headache, while nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea may also occur. ■

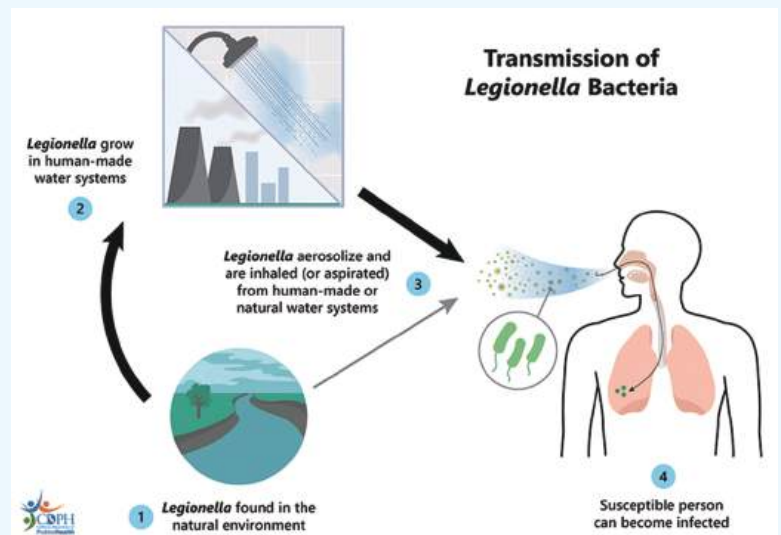


Image courtesy of California Department of Public Health

'Ne Zha 2' hits Malaysian screens

KUALA LUMPUR – Chinese animated blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" hit Malaysian movie screens at Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, on Saturday.

"Chinese films are gaining increasing popularity in the Malaysian market," said Tan Cheong

Tatt, chief operation officer of TGV Cinemas, during the premiere event.

TGV Cinemas is one of major cinema chains in Malaysia. Tan Cheong Tatt noted that the production quality of Chinese animated films has improved dramatically compared to the past.

The event drew more than 1,000 attendees, including cultural and media representatives from Malaysia and China, as well as local fans.

Tan Chiew Huang, a local fan, said after the screening that "every frame is visually stunning, as beautiful as a fairy tale."

"The movie was absolutely fantastic. I cried multiple times during the most emotional scenes," Swee Kai Lit, another local fan, told Xinhua.

Joyce Lee, managing director of Encore Films Pte. Ltd, said that the film was meticulously crafted, with cutting-edge visual effects that captivate audiences.

"The film's soaring social media buzz suggests strong market potential here," said Joyce Lee.

She added that movies are a vital bridge for cultural exchange, and audiences from all walks of life in Malaysia will gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture through this story and the movie.



Fans pose for during the premiere of the Chinese animated blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday. The film will be formally released in Malaysian cinemas on Thursday. - Xinhua

- Xinhua

China reaffirms commitment to reform, opening up at 'two sessions'

Analysis

BEIJING – Those keen to understand the trajectory and focus of the world's second-largest economy will find a recurring theme at China's "two sessions" this year – reform and opening up.

At the ongoing annual sessions of China's national legislature and top political advisory body – the first since last July's reform-themed third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China – reform was once again highlighted across a broad spectrum of areas, ranging from rural development and improving fiscal, tax and financial systems, to education and health care.

The "two sessions" agenda has also underscored China's commitment to expanding high-standard opening up and stabilizing foreign trade and foreign investment.

"Regardless of changes in the external environment, we should remain steadfast in our commitment to opening up," said a government work report submitted to China's national legislature for deliberation on Wednesday. "We should steadily expand institutional opening up and take the initiative to open wider and advance unilateral opening up in a well-ordered way, to promote reform and development through greater openness."

WHY IT MATTERS

China's commitment to reform and opening up is reflected in the latest development on the country's southernmost island province of Hainan, where the free trade port will begin independent customs operations in 2025.

On the sidelines of the "two sessions," Cai Qiang, a national legislator and deputy

director of the Office of the Hainan Free Trade Port Working Committee, said the tax system tailored to the Hainan Free Trade Port is taking shape, and efforts will be made to further upgrade its preferential tax policies.

China pledged to accelerate the implementation of core policies for the free trade port this year, and improve opening up and development policies for economic development zones, according to the government work report.

From deepening reform in its special economic zones already established to further easing market access restrictions for investment, China has consistently championed reform and opening up, boosting its high-quality development and sharing opportunities with the rest of the world.

Since 1978, reform and opening up has transformed a once-impoverished country into a market-oriented economic powerhouse, with China's per-capita GDP surging from US\$156.4 in 1978 to US\$12,614.1 in 2023.

China's GDP grew by 5 percent year on year in 2024, ranking among the world's fastest-growing major economies and continuing to contribute about 30 percent to global economic growth.

Yet challenges remain. Domestically, the country faces headwinds, including insufficient demand to reinforce its economic recovery while fostering innovation-driven development. Globally, businesses must navigate escalating trade tensions, rising protectionism, and the latest wave of technological revolution reshaping industries, production models and lifestyles.

The Chinese leadership has made it clear that challenges arising from reform

and opening up can only be solved by pressing ahead with reform and opening up, demonstrating a firm determination to address the risks and obstacles on the path ahead.

China targets an economic growth rate of around 5 percent this year, as policymakers are determined to secure a steady recovery through decisive and effective measures.

"By deepening reform, opening up and innovation across the board and enhancing the intensity of our macro policies, we will develop new drivers of growth and have the ability and conditions to achieve this target," according to a report from the State Council on the implementation of the 2024 plan for national economic and social development and on the 2025 draft plan, which was submitted to lawmakers for review on Wednesday.

Liao Wenbin, a national legislator and mayor of Yibin City in southwest China's Sichuan Province, sees 2025 as a crucial year for further, more comprehensive deepening of reform and opening up, saying that reforms are set to open up a broader space for the country's high-quality development.

WHAT IT MEANS TO THE WORLD

Though the "two sessions" focus mainly on China's domestic development policies, China's high-quality development is increasingly creating shared opportunities for the world and its open market is becoming truly global.

In a world filled with uncertainties, the ongoing "two sessions" have sent an unequivocal message: China is committed to expanding high-standard opening up and continues to share development opportunities with the world.

According to this year's government work report, China will broaden international cooperation by further opening up to promote greater mutual reinforcement and higher-standard positive interplay between domestic and international economic flows.

"Opening up has been a pivotal driver of China's development, and the Chinese government remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing openness, pushing to open its doors even wider," Shen Danyang, director of the Research Office of the State Council, told a press briefing on Wednesday when elaborating on the report.

This year's report outlines several new measures for opening up, highlighting efforts to foster a first-rate business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized, Shen said.

Embracing on the country's emerging opportunities, foreign giants like Tesla and BMW have expanded their presence in China, leveraging its vast industrial ecosystems and consumer market to drive breakthroughs in electric vehicles, renewable energy and advanced materials.

A recent report from the American Chamber of Commerce in South China shows that approximately 58 percent of foreign companies surveyed consider China to be one of their top three investment priorities, and 76 percent plan to reinvest in the country in 2025.

Jiang Ying, Deloitte China chair and a national political advisor, emphasized that China's ongoing commitment to high-standard opening up will draw greater international capital and technology to the Chinese market while simultaneously boosting the global reach of Chinese products and services. – Xinhua

Nation's top political advisory body holds 3rd plenary meeting of annual session

BEIJING – The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the nation's top political advisory body, held the third plenary meeting of the ongoing annual session yesterday.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, attended the meeting.

During the meeting, 14 national political advisors shared their views on a wide range of topics.

Senior officials from the CPC Central Committee and the State Council were invited to hear the suggestions.

Tu Haiming praised the recent positive developments in Hong Kong, saying that they once again prove that the region can always count on the motherland.

He stressed the need to boost cultural confidence and national identification among local residents for the steady and continued success of "one country, two systems."

Zhang Guanghan urged the swift establishment of a comprehensive cultural heritage protection framework, calling for improvements to laws and regulations, the development of new oversight means, and more efforts to raise public awareness.

He added that efforts must be made to ensure the entire society participates in, supports, and promotes the systemic protection and unified oversight of cultural heritage.

Zhao Yingmin called for measures to modernize environmental governance systems and capacities.

Work needed to be done to coordinate carbon emission reduction, pollution mitigation, green development, and economic growth, he added. – Xinhua



A group meeting of deputies from the Taiwan delegation is held at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing yesterday. – AFP

Lawmakers submit 269 proposals to annual legislative session

BEIJING – The nation's lawmakers had submitted 269 proposals to the country's annual legislative session as of Saturday noon, the deadline for proposal submission at the ongoing third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).

The secretariat of the session said yesterday that it had also received over

8,000 suggestions from NPC deputies.

Among the proposals, 268 are related to legislative work and one concerns oversight work, the secretariat said. It added that the proposals primarily cover legislation in key, emerging, and foreign-related areas.

The suggestions cover a wide range of topics, including boosting consumption,

promoting AI applications to drive economic growth, and protecting the rights and interests of private enterprises.

The secretariat is studying these proposals and will compile a report on the handling of the proposals to present to the session's presidium for deliberation.

– Xinhua