

Macau lawmaker, CPPCC member Alan Ho likens Hengqin to 'Peach Blossom Spring'

Tony Wong

Macau lawmaker Alan Ho Ion Sang, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in Beijing yesterday likened Hengqin to the ancient "Peach Blossom Spring" concept, as it combines the advantages and strengths of both Macau and the adjacent island where the two places' integrated development is creating "unprecedented" opportunities and vitality for Macau's continuous development.

According to DeepSeek, the term "Peach Blossom Spring" (桃花源 – "taohua yuan") originates from a famous Chinese fable written by poet Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) during the Eastern Jin Dynasty. It describes an idyllic, utopian village hidden from the outside world, where people live in harmony with nature, free from the troubles and conflicts of society. In contemporary usage, "Peach Blossom Spring" has evolved to symbolise several modern concepts, such as a utopian or ideal society, an escape from modern stress, and a personal haven.

Ho, also a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, briefed reporters at the Great Hall of the People before attending yesterday morning's closing meeting of the third session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

Including Ho, nine CPPCC National Committee members gave a press briefing one after another yesterday. Ho was the only one from Macau.

Ho, an indirectly-elected member of the Macau Legislative Assembly (AL), made the remarks when asked by journalists about Hengqin's development, when he also said that the Macau-Hengqin integrated development has proven to the world that the "One Country, Two Systems" principle is feasible, achievable, and has won people's hearts.

Ho, a banking consultant by profession, also underlined that various breakthrough achievements have been made in the integration between Macau and Hengqin.

Ho, a vice-chairman of the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (known as Kai Fong in Cantonese), noted that the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate in Hengqin, a residential project developed for Macau residents to purchase, includes various community facilities such as a school, a health station, and a service centre for senior citizens.

The MNN estate's elderly service centre is operated by Kai Fong's Guangdong branch office.

The MNN neighbourhood's health station is run by the Macau Health Bureau (SSM).

Continued on p.3



Macau lawmaker, CPPCC National Committee member Alan Ho Ion Sang speaks to reporters during yesterday's press briefing at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. – Photo courtesy of China Daily

Trump says pro-Palestinian campus protester 'first arrest of many to come'

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump said yesterday that the detention of Mahmoud Khalil, a leader of pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University in New York, is "the first arrest of many to come."

"We know there are more students at Columbia and other Universities across the Country who have engaged in pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity, and the Trump Administration will not tolerate it," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Khalil, one of the most prominent faces of the university's protest movement that erupted last year in opposition to Israel's war in Gaza, was arrested by immigration officials over the weekend.

The Department of Homeland Security said the action was taken "in support of President Trump's executive orders prohibiting anti-Semitism, and in coordination with the Department of State."

Khalil, a Columbia graduate, held a permanent residency green card at the time of his arrest, according to the Student Workers of Columbia union.

Trump threatened in his post further action against other campus protesters, some of whom he alleged without evidence to be "paid agitators."

"We will find, apprehend, and deport these terrorist sympathizers from our country – never to return again," he wrote.

US campuses including Columbia's were rocked by student protests against Israel's war in Gaza following the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack. The demonstrations ignited accusations of anti-Semitism.

Protests – some of which turned violent and saw campus buildings occupied and lectures disrupted – pitted students protesting Israel's conduct against pro-Israel campaigners, many of whom were Jewish. – AFP

UK MP to quit over assault, triggering electoral test for Starmer

LONDON – A lawmaker suspended from Britain's ruling Labour Party for punching a man in the street announced yesterday that he will resign as an MP, paving the way for the first electoral test of Keir Starmer's premiership.

Mike Amesbury, who received a 10-week suspended jail sentence last month after admitting repeatedly punching the man during a late-night altercation in October, told the BBC he will "step aside at the earliest opportunity".

His resignation from the northwest English seat of Runcorn and Helsby will

trigger the first by-election since Labour swept to power in July last year. The party has since slumped in the polls.

Amesbury has sat as an independent since Labour suspended him after the Mail Online published a video showing the assault on 45-year-old Paul Fellows in the town of Frodsham, southeast of Liverpool, shortly before 3 a.m. on October 26.

A court heard Fellows had complained to Amesbury about a bridge closure.

The MP apologised to the victim and his family after pleading guilty to assault in January. – AFP

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The Macau Post Daily

Nation's top political advisory body concludes annual session

China's top political advisory body yesterday concluded its annual session, calling on political advisors to make new and greater contribution to advancing Chinese modernization.

– Story on p. 7

Canada's next PM Mark Carney vows to 'win' US trade war

Canada's incoming prime minister Mark Carney struck a defiant note as the former central banker vowed to win US President Donald Trump's trade war, saying his country will "never" be part of the United States.

– Story on p. 11

5 years ago, WHO's pandemic call shook world into action

Five years ago today, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced COVID-19 had become a pandemic – a moment when the world finally woke up to the unfolding disaster.

– Story on p. 12

Police bust mahjong gambling den

Ada Lei

A local man was arrested on Sunday for running an illegal mahjong gambling operation, along with 18 others allegedly involved in the case, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Wong Wai Chon said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Macau's gaming industry law, only its six gaming concessionaires are permitted to run mahjong gambling operations.

The 60-year-old operator surnamed Chan told the police that he is jobless. The 18 other suspects comprise 11 males and 7 females, aged between 32 and 75. One is a non-resident worker (NRW) who works in construction; the remainder are locals, most of whom claimed to be jobless.

According to Wong, the police received a report on Sunday about illegal mahjong gambling activities in an industrial building in the northern district. They raided a flat on the seventh floor of a residential building on Rua Quatro do Bairro Iao Hon (祐漢新村第四街) and found 18 individuals suspected of participating in mahjong gambling, apart from the suspected operator, Chan. Inside the flat, there were five electronic mahjong tables, four of which were in use at the time.

Under questioning, Chan told

the police that he had rented the flat for gambling activities since mid-September 2024 for a monthly payment of HK\$19,000. The opening hours were from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., charging customers 100 patacas per hour as "table rent". The 18 gamblers, who became witnesses, told the police that they had learnt of the place through friends and mentioned that after winning a mahjong game, they would pay Chan between 10 to 100 patacas as "water money" (水錢)*.

Since the operation started, Chan had earned about 120,000 patacas in profit, and on the day of the raid, he had made 330 patacas, Wong said, adding that the police seized four mahjong tables and 4,900 patacas in cash that day.

Chan has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) and is facing a charge of running an illegal mahjong gambling operation. ■

* *In some contexts, particularly in informal or underground settings, "water money" refers to the interest or fees charged on loans, especially in gambling. It can also refer to the commission or cut taken by a middleman or organiser in such activities. For instance, in a gambling context, the "house" (operator) might take a certain percentage of the winnings as "water money". - DeepSeek*



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows PSP officers escorting the 18 mahjong den gamblers to a police station.

MGM, Art Basel HK to unveil 'MGM Discoveries Art Prize' winner



These photos provided by integrated resort operator MGM yesterday shows shortlisted winners Shin Min (from left to right), Kayode Ojo and Saju Kunhan.

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort (IR) operator MGM said in a statement yesterday that the winner of the inaugural "MGM Discoveries Art Prize" is slated to be announced at the MGM Lounge during the Art Basel Hong Kong on March 28.

The award was created by MGM and Art Basel Hong Kong to "support emerging talents of all ages and nationalities in exploring art's infinite possibilities, elevating their influence in the international art world while infusing fresh energy into the global art scene".

The winner, the statement said, is set to receive US\$50,000 (400,000 patacas), which is to be shared with their representing gallery. They also have a chance to hold an exhibition and "engage in artistic exchanges" in Macau.

The three shortlisted artists for the awards are Shin Min, represented by P21 in Seoul; Kayode Ojo, represented by Sweetwater in Berlin; and Saju Kunhan, represented by Tarq in Mumbai.

The evaluating jury comprises five experts, namely Aaron Cezar, Founding Director of Delfina Foundation, a non-profit that fosters artistic exchanges in the United Kingdom; Antonia Carver, Director of Art Jameel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Christopher K. Ho, Executive Director of Asia Art Archive; X Zhu-Nowell, Executive Director and Chief Curator of Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai; and Sam Seungho Park, Chairperson of the arts and cultural PARKSEOBO FOUNDATION in Seoul.

"This award highlights the originality and innovation of international emerging talents in the art world", the statement said. ■

Police nab mainlander for VIP room investment fraud

Ada Lei

A woman from the mainland was arrested on Friday for investment fraud involving a casino VIP room and possession of a forged document, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a special press conference yesterday.

The 43-year-old suspect surnamed Liu claimed to be jobless.

According to Lei, a middle-aged woman from the mainland reported on December 30, 2024 that Liu tricked her into investing in a casino VIP room by promising high returns. The woman met Liu in the mainland in September 2023, and they became friends. In February 2024, Liu contacted her, claiming to be a shareholder of a casino VIP room. She persuaded the woman to invest in the VIP room and promised a 4.0 percent monthly return.

In May 2024, Liu took the woman to visit the VIP room to convince her that she was "indeed" a shareholder of the business. Starting in mid-May 2024, the woman began transferring a total of 1.544 million yuan (1.701 million patacas) to Liu's account. She later received a purported return of 167,000 yuan. In late



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. - Photo: Ada Lei

September 2024, the woman stopped receiving money from Liu and requested her money back but failed to receive any. Therefore, she reported the case to the police in December, saying that she had lost a total of 1.377 million yuan.

Liu was arrested at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge checkpoint when entering Macau on Friday, but she refused to cooperate. The police found a forged Hong Kong identity card on her. Liu told the police that she had purchased the

forged ID online for about 1,000 yuan before coming to Macau but never showed it to the victim. She claimed that the forged ID was to convince her mainland friends that she had the ability to move to Hong Kong. The police confirmed that Liu was not a shareholder of the VIP club.

Liu was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday where she faces charges of fraud and possession of a forged document. ■

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 98%.



18°C~26°C

Source: SMG

Only 3 days left to catch 'Moments of Light with Kun lam'

Interview by Rui Pastorin

There are only three days left to appreciate architect and sculptor Cristina Rocha Leiria's solo exhibition "Moments of Light with Kun lam" at the Kun lam Ecumenical Centre in Nape, with exhibitiongoers invited to view the 34 sculptures showcased at the tranquil venue.

The ongoing exhibition features sculptures mainly created using natural and man-made crystals, Cristina Leiria told the *Post* in an interview at the centre yesterday, while other materials like jade, amethyst, wood and brushed steel were also used in creating the pieces. The pieces that exhibitiongoers may admire include creations featuring Kun lam (aka Guanyin in Putonghua), who is the goddess of mercy and considered to be the physical embodiment of compassion, along with other works such as one that depicts a parent holding up a child.

Cristina Leiria, who is nearly 80 years old, originally designed and created the centre, which was inaugurated on March 21, 1999. And for her, it felt good to exhibit her works there, noting: "It's good because I feel at home."

The exhibition kicked off in December last year and throughout its run, guided tours led by Cristina Leiria have been available by appointment. She noted that although tiring, it has been great to both see and meet people who really appreciated being there as well as "really felt" what she said, an experience that has been overall very rewarding for her, especially when, at the end of the day, she reads the comments that they have left behind.

Cristina Leiria said that among the visitors that the exhibition has seen so far, most have been tourists. The exhibition has received not that many visitors from Macau, but there have been some who came with their children, which she said makes her very happy. "I love children and for me it's a pleasure to receive them", adding that kids know where the "good points of energy" are.

However, hosting the exhibition has not been without its challenges, with Cristina Leiria noting that although a lot of effort has been put in setting it up, she noted that she feels a bit disappointed with the visitor turnout. Moreover, while all of her works are for sale, none have been sold throughout the exhibition's three-month-long run, creating additional challenges. Neither has it received much news coverage since it opened in December, while she is not paid for anything regarding the exhibition.

In spite of these challenges, Cristina Leiria said that she understood that people have their reasons, choosing to think about the situation differently: "I think if this happened to me, it's because I need to learn some lesson. Our life is our best university. It's our best school. We learn a lot and we learn more from the things that happened to us, different to what we wanted. We learn a lot with the difficulties."

Now in its last few days, Cristina Leiria remains steadfast in promoting her exhibition.

Exhibitiongoers can view the works daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. until Thursday. Moreover, those interested in learning more about the creation of the venue and the work behind may visit the lower floor to learn more about the centre through photos and a video in Chinese, English and Portuguese, alongside other exhibits. ■



Cristina Rocha Leiria poses after yesterday's interview at the Kun lam Ecumenical Centre in Nape. – Photos taken yesterday by Rui Pastorin

Tsinghua University students visit UM



This undated handout photo provided by the University of Macau (UM) on Friday shows a group photo of the participants of the recent UM-Tsinghua exchange programme.

Adrian Vallesteros

A delegation comprising 19 students and faculty members from Weixian College* at Tsinghua University last month engaged in an exchange programme at Lui Che Woo College (LCWC) of the public University of Macau (UM) from February 9 to 13, according to a UM statement on Friday.

The statement noted that the primary goal of the exchange was to provide participants with an understanding of UM's residential college system, while also promoting cultural exchanges and enhancing leadership skills among students.

The statement said that the programme was a blend of academic exchanges, cultural explorations, and team-building activities, highlighting the role of UM's residential college system in fostering holistic student development. Participants from Weixian College remarked that the experience allowed them to gain insights into UM's approach, prompting discussions about the potential for implementing a similar system at Tsinghua University to further advance student leadership and overall personal growth, the statement added.

Desmond Lam Chee Shiong, the LCWC College Master, provided the Tsinghua delegation a thorough overview of the college's facilities and unique features during the exchange. The statement further mentioned

that academic discussions and tea sessions were held by college fellows and affiliates. The special role that residential colleges play in developing well-rounded people was the main topic of these conversations. According to the statement, LCWC student leaders also discussed their experiences in areas like floor management, event planning, pastoral care**, and overall college development.

Furthermore, the statement noted that the Weixian College group participated in activities including a coffee workshop, lunch gatherings at LCWC, table tennis matches, and workshops in Muay Thai and Latin dance. They also toured UM's University Gallery and Wu Yee Sun Library, as well as explored several landmarks in Macau. ■

*Weixian College is one of the residential colleges at Tsinghua University, designed to provide students with a comprehensive living and learning environment. Residential colleges at Tsinghua, including Weixian College, aim to foster a sense of community among students and faculty, promoting interdisciplinary interaction and personal development outside the traditional classroom setting. – DeepSeek

** In education, "pastoral care" refers to the support and guidance provided to students in schools or universities, focusing on their personal, social, and emotional well-being. – DeepSeek

Macau lawmaker, CPPCC member Alan Ho likens Hengqin to 'Peach Blossom Spring'

Continued from p.1

Ho said that since MNN home sales started in late 2023, Kai Fong's Guangdong branch office has launched various promotional campaigns aiming to enable Macau residents to gain a better understanding of the MNN estate and its community facilities, adding that Kai Fong has organised over 600 trips for Macau residents to visit the MNN estate.

Ho said that many of those who have visited the MNN neighbourhood have become aware that many breakthroughs have been achieved in the integration between Macau and Hengqin concerning residents' daily life matters.

For instance, Ho pointed out that students of schools in Hengqin run by Macau organisations are entitled to the same benefits as their counterparts studying at schools in Macau, while Macau residents living in Hengqin can choose to visit the MNN neighbourhood's health station directly run by Macau Health Bureau for medical treatment.

Moreover, Ho noted that Macau residents living in Hengqin can complete Macau public administrative formalities at one of the two 24-hour self-service centres run by the Macau government there. ■ (Related story on p.7)



Local painter Rico Lou showcases the beauty of fish

Rui Pastorin

A total of 10 works created by local painter Rico Lou (盧宏業) are being presented in a solo exhibition at the 10 Fantasia Gallery until May 2, with the artist hoping to showcase the beauty of fish beyond being just food.

The exhibition kicked off last week and features oils on canvas. It is entitled “Tashutayou Sakana”, which according to AI chatbot Poe is a Japanese phrase that translates to a “variety of fish” or “diverse types of fish”.

A statement at the gallery noted that fish are common creatures that are inseparable from humans in spite of living in different environments. Though humans mainly see them as food, the statement added that fish experience a raft of daily challenges from the moment they are born, evolving into having various shapes and colours and making them works of art sculpted by nature.

Lou, who was born in 1983 and is a graduate of Taiwan’s Chengchi University, presents depictions of fish before they are cooked and intentionally uses many colours, the statement said, adding that his artistic approach aims to reappraise the beauty of each of the 10 kinds of fish, while also showcasing the colours of their scales.

The free-admission exhibition venue is located on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) and exhibitiongoers can appreciate Lou’s works at the gallery’s room B06. One may view them daily, except on Monday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Photos: Rui Pastorin

HK should fast-track integration of GBA

Commentary by Tu Haiming*

The “Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” (GBA) was released six years ago, but the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has been relatively slow in advancing the project. Now, Hong Kong needs to take more proactive measures to contribute to the GBA’s development.

The development of Hong Kong and Macao SARs is intrinsically linked to the national goal of building a stronger Chinese nation. It is crucial for more Hong Kong residents to realize that the GBA is not just a strategic project for national development; it gives Hong Kong a golden opportunity to boost its growth. Only by leveraging opportunities within the Greater Bay Area and connecting the mainland market, can Hong Kong transform into a “super value creator” and sustain growth.

Since the GBA is a shared home for Guangdong province, and the Hong Kong and Macao SARs, every member of Hong Kong society should see itself as a contributor to the GBA’s growth.

The visit of Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, to Hong Kong after the Spring Festival holiday set a good example for Hong Kong. As the progress of the GBA’s development has been slow, there is a need to urgently take measures to push the initiative forward. Xia’s visit to the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone underscored the sharp contrast in progress between the two sides, as evidenced by the many skyscrapers in Shenzhen’s zone juxtaposed against the undeveloped areas in its Hong Kong counterpart.

There was a time when Shenzhen used to learn from Hong Kong. Today, it has left Hong Kong far behind when it comes to fast-paced and efficient development. Looking at the tremendous changes across the mainland, the difference between the two cities becomes even more striking.

Hong Kong should urgently catch up with the mainland’s

reform and development pace, and address each issue head-on to move forward.

Xia has urged Hong Kong to promote innovation to remove the hurdles to development, and engage with development zones such as Hengqin, Qianhai and Hetao, seize the opportunities created by the new round of industrial and technological revolution, and explore new development paths to boost development and strengthen connectivity with the mainland.

For example, it should align its rules with those of the mainland and integrate with the GBA. But, as some say, won’t the “one country, two systems” principle be undermined if Hong Kong were to align its rules and social and economic systems with those of the mainland? This is a misinterpretation of the SAR’s relationship with the motherland.

As capitalism has evolved over time, Hong Kong’s system needs to keep pace with the evolution. More important, the GBA’s reform is aimed at boosting development, not undermining “one country, two systems”. The principle should be to pursue the best solutions to problems no matter where they come from.

The GBA’s success depends on enhanced cooperation, especially between Guangdong and Hong Kong. Under the central government’s leadership, Hengqin, a 106-square-kilometer island near Macao poised to become a free trade zone, is the innovation platform of Macao, while Qianhai, an area in Shenzhen with very high growth potential, and Hetao, a cooperation zone between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, can help boost Hong Kong’s development.

Since cooperation is a multi-directional process, Hong Kong, with the strong support of the central government and Guangdong, has to play a bigger role in the development of the Greater Bay Area.

*The author is a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and chairman of the Hong Kong New Era Development Thinktank.

The views don’t necessarily represent those of China Daily.

MPU celebrates cultural diversity at China-PSCs festival



This undated handout photo provided by the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) on Friday shows the participants in its recently held third edition of its China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Cultural Festival.

Adrian Vallesteros

The third edition of the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSCs) Cultural Festival, themed “Chinese-PSCs Convergence: Flourishing Talents,” was recently organised by the Student Affairs Office of the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) with the goal of fostering intercultural exchanges between the Portuguese-speaking and Chinese communities, according to a statement by the public university last Friday.

The statement noted that aside from featuring foreign food stalls where students from various

countries offered their culinary specialties, the event also featured a blend of music and dance performances.

The statement noted that the cultural festival featured a diverse lineup of performances, including traditional African ethnic dances and music played on a variety of both Chinese, African and Western instruments. Students from China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) participated by wearing traditional costumes and performing folk dances, highlighting the integration of students from different backgrounds and fostering

cross-cultural understanding and friendships.

Moreover, the statement said, the event’s international food stalls enabled students from different countries to create and share their signature dishes. According to the statement, this provided the attendees unique culinary experiences representative of diverse cultures, including specialties from Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde (Cape Verde), China, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste (East Timor). ■

Man tries to smuggle 43 hippo teeth to mainland via Gongbei checkpoint

Tony Wong

Gongbei customs announced in a statement yesterday that a man attempted to smuggle 43 hippopotamus teeth* from Macau to the mainland via the Gongbei checkpoint last month.

The statement identified the man as a mainlander surnamed Li.

According to the statement, the man, who was entering the mainland through “the nothing to declare” channel on February 14, did not put his bag on the X-ray machine for inspection, while customs officers noticed that he attempted to evade customs inspection by walking close to the crowds of travellers.

Consequently, the statement said, customs officers intercepted him and seized 43 items from his bag that appeared to be animal teeth or ivory, weighing 1.4 kilogrammes in total.

Yesterday’s statement said that after technical assessments, Gongbei customs has confirmed that the entire contraband consists of hippopotamus teeth, a category listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). ■



This undated handout photo released by Gongbei customs yesterday shows the 43 seized hippopotamus teeth.

*Hippopotamus teeth are not considered true ivory, but they are sometimes used as a substitute for ivory from elephants, walrus, or other animals. Hippo teeth are made of dentin, which is similar to ivory in texture and appearance, but they are not as highly valued or as expensive as elephant ivory.

The canines and incisors of hippos are the most commonly used parts for carving and decorative purposes. While they

are not as expensive as elephant ivory, they can still fetch a significant price depending on the size, quality, and craftsmanship of the item.

It’s important to note that the trade and sale of hippopotamus teeth are regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to ensure that their harvesting does not threaten the species’ survival.

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 1.85 pct lower

HONG KONG – Hong Kong’s stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 1.85 percent to close at 23,783.49 points. The Hang

Seng China Enterprises Index fell 2.12 percent to 8,725.01 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index slumped 2.52 percent to 5,885.49 points.

– Xinhua

Police bust illegal exchange dealer for fraud

Ada Lei

A man from the mainland was arrested on Saturday for fraud and illegal exchange activities, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a special press conference yesterday.

The 37-year-old suspect surnamed Zhao claimed to be jobless.

According to Lei, a man from the mainland reported to the Judiciary Police on Saturday that he was defrauded at a hotel in Cotai in a currency exchange

scam, resulting in a total loss of 45,000 yuan (51,500 patacas). The man planned to exchange Hong Kong dollars for gambling and contacted Zhao, who had exchanged currency with him before. They agreed to exchange 45,000 yuan into HK\$50,000 in chips.

On Saturday, Zhao told the man through WeChat that he was at a casino in Cotai and sent him a photo in which he was holding HK\$50,000 in chips. Zhao asked him to transfer 45,000 yuan to his

bank account in the mainland first. After the man made the transfer, Zhao refused to give him the chips, claiming he had not received the payment. The man suspected he had been defrauded, so he went to the casino to find Zhao and stopped him from leaving. He reported the case to the police afterwards. The police arrested Zhao later that day and discovered that he had no cash or chips for exchange.

Under questioning, Zhao admitted to the crime, saying that he wanted to recover the

victim's cousin's unpaid debt. He also told the police that he had engaged in currency exchange activities four times since January 2025, involving a total amount of HK\$160,000, and had made a profit of HK\$60 for every HK\$100,000 exchanged. The police confiscated HK\$1,900 from Zhao.

Zhao was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday and is facing charges of illegal currency exchange activities and fraud. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Ada Lei

China's regional powerhouses turbocharge high-quality development

Analysis

BEIJING — Having long propelled China's economic ascent, major provincial-level regions are now leading the charge in the country's transformative shift toward high-quality development.

China's top 10 provincial economic heavyweights, including Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong, Zhejiang and Sichuan, accounted for over 60 percent of the country's GDP, despite covering less than 20 percent of its land area.

Their development is redefining China's economic landscape and providing insights into how the world's second-largest economy navigates domestic and global challenges in the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) to lay a strong foundation for the next five years and beyond.

INNOVATION AS THE NEW DRIVING FORCE

From artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and brain-computer interfaces to innovative drugs, China's economic powerhouses are doubling down on sci-tech innovation, yielding significant results in high-tech sectors.

A prime example is Zhejiang Province, where the capital city, Hangzhou, has emerged as the country's hottest new tech hub. It has successfully nurtured a wave of cutting-edge companies known as the "Six Little Dragons," including the globally trending startups DeepSeek and Unitree Robotics.

Hangzhou's rise into an emerging tech hub is no coincidence. Experts and analysts attributed its success to years of groundwork, driven by the city's deep talent pool, a robust industrial ecosystem, strong policy support, a business-friendly environment, and visionary economic governance.

In Zhejiang's 2025 government work report, the province vowed to further cultivate new quality productive forces this year, foster emerging industries, plan for future industries, and promote the deep integration of the digital economy with the real economy.

In the neighboring Jiangsu Province, a relentless focus on sci-tech innovation has cemented its position as a front-runner in the numbers of national key laboratories

and engineering technology centers. Last year, Jiangsu set a national record with 13 innovative drugs approved for sale.

Last year, the GDP growth of Zhejiang and Jiangsu reached 5.5 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively, both exceeding the national growth of 5 percent.

Leveraging their sci-tech resources, China's powerhouse provinces are well poised to drive innovation as a key engine of growth and accelerate the deployment of sci-tech advances in major industries, creating a ripple effect nationwide, said national political advisor Jin Li, vice president of Southern University of Science and Technology.

CLIMBING UP THE VALUE CHAIN

In just 53 seconds, a new energy vehicle (NEV) can roll off the fully automated assembly line at GAC Aion's factory in Guangdong Province, where precise robotic arms twist and turn in seamless coordination.

Dubbed a "dark factory" due to its minimal reliance on human labor and lighting, the facility is also the NEV industry's sole "lighthouse factory" worldwide, highlighting its role in spearheading intelligent manufacturing.

The factory symbolizes Guangdong's broader industrial transformation. Once synonymous with low-end assembly lines, the province is now embracing advanced technologies and increasing investments to modernize traditional industries and move up the value chain.

At present, production of advanced manufacturing accounts for 56.7 percent of Guangdong's industrial output, while high-tech manufacturing takes up 31.6 percent of the total.

Shandong Province, one of the country's major grain-producing areas, has empowered modern agriculture development with new technologies, such as drones and automated irrigation systems.

In its 2025 government work report, Shandong pledged to implement an action plan for high-quality industrial chain development, focusing on high-end, intelligent and green features this year, while also accelerating

the development of intelligent agriculture.

Leveraging their strong industrial foundation, these powerhouses should further promote the upgrading of traditional industries, maintain leading roles in shaping new competitive advantages, and set an example for other regions, said Pan Jiaofeng, a national lawmaker and president of the Institutes of Science and Development at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

GREATER INTEGRATION

For the economic powerhouses to maintain momentum, it is essential to foster a fair and efficient environment free from local protectionism, according to analysts.

Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality have recently completed an electricity-sharing mechanism as part of their latest effort to enhance market connectivity. In recent years, the two regions have aligned their market entry policies and jointly launched a cross-regional development zone.

"By addressing the bottlenecks in economic circulation and curbing unhealthy competition, the innovation potential of market players will be fully unleashed," said Yang Decai, a national political advisor and professor at Nanjing University.

Regional integration is gaining momentum nationwide. Shanghai is expanding cooperation within the Yangtze River Delta region. Guangdong is streamlining administrative services to improve connectivity in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Hubei is partnering with Jiangxi and other central Chinese provinces to build a globally competitive digital ecosystem.

"Different regions are at varying stages of development. By implementing regional strategies, we can further amplify comparative advantages, improve efficiency, and unlock greater growth potential," said Liu Baokui, a researcher at a think tank under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

According to Bao Jiawei, an urban development researcher, it is about forging synergies, not working in isolation. — Xinhua

Manila should realize the wind is now blowing in a new direction

China Daily Editorial

In the complex geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific, the recent tensions between China and the Philippines, as a consequence of Manila's provocative words and actions in relation to its territorial disputes with China, have ignited concerns of potential conflict between the two countries.

As the region grapples with the long-standing territorial disputes and competing maritime claims in the waters, it is imperative that all stakeholders exercise restraint and prioritize diplomacy and dialogue.

Yet it seems that Manila is determined to play the role of an ill-intentioned troublemaker in the South China Sea, as evidenced by the Philippine defense chief's bragging in an interview about the Philippines being part of a possible coalition against China with the United States and several other Western countries.

In his interview with the Associated Press published on Wednesday, Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro laid bare Manila's intention to escalate tensions and drag the US and its allies and partners into a face-off with China.

Teodoro said the Philippines and its security allies would take measures to counter any attempt by China to impose an air defense zone or restrict freedom of flights over the South China Sea. This remark was clearly based on the false notion that China is considering doing so.

In 2013, China established an air defense identification zone in the East China Sea in accordance with international norms due to the worsened security environment around its Diaoyu Islands. The country has the legitimate right to do the same with regard to its territorial waters in the South China Sea. It is the Philippines, with its repeated provocations over China's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the South China Sea, that is pushing China toward that.

By playing Manila's now customary trick of distorting facts and confusing right and wrong, Teodoro accused China of posing "the greatest threat" to the national security of the Philippines, and doubled down on that false accusation by suggesting that it should also be deemed to be "a global threat".

This is nonsense.

The fact is, it is the Philippines, emboldened by the backing of the previous US administration to act aggressively in the South China Sea, that is posing a serious threat to peace and stability in the waters and the region at large.

The Philippine defense chief's warmongering rhetoric shows that he clearly does not know which way the wind is blowing today. The new US administration under Donald Trump has sent an unmistakable message to allies and partners that they should take security in their own hands, and that US security protection is no longer a free lunch.

With the US wary of being dragged into a conflict by its allies, Manila should recalibrate its approach to its territorial disputes with China. The only viable way forward for the Philippines is to opt for dialogue and negotiations. If it continues with its reckless provoking of China, it will only find itself discarded as proxy by the US, which will rightly view it as a liability.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a news conference held on the sidelines of the ongoing two sessions on Friday that a third reading of the text for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea has been completed. This should be a wake-up call to Manila that its troublemaking in the waters runs counter to the region's prevailing desire for peace and stability.

No sovereign country would sit idle if an unruly neighbor that coveted its territory started encroaching on it. China is no exception, and it has accordingly stepped up its maritime law enforcement patrols in the South China Sea, and the People's Liberation Army has also enhanced its vigilance and combat preparedness, including conducting training maneuvers and military drills in the waters, so as to be ready to defend the country's maritime interests and rights as necessary.

Manila should strive to play its part in fostering an environment of friendly engagement, so the region is characterized by peace, stability, and mutual prosperity. If it continues to try to set off fireworks in the South China Sea amid the complex dynamics of the Asia-Pacific, it will only be a burnt child that dreads the fire.

— Courtesy of China Daily