

**Join the fight against Dengue Fever**

Vases or saucers under potted plants should be scrubbed, cleaned and have water changed at least once a week

MSARG Dengue Fever Prevention Working Group



FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Goldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

N.º 4630 **FRIDAY** T. 11 °/ 19° Air Quality Bad  
20 Dec 2024

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

MOP 8.00 HKD 10.00 2305 4271

**VISITOR ARRIVALS SURGED 9.6% Y-O-Y TO 2.8 MILLION IN NOVEMBER, ALMOST FULLY RECOVERING TO THE LEVEL OF THE SAME MONTH IN 2019**

**PORTUGUESE CONSUL GENERAL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE PRESENCE OF COMMUNITY**

**CHINA'S CATL PLANNING MAJOR EXPANSION OF BATTERY SWAPPING FOR EVS**



AP PHOTO



**Taiwan** A fire in a food-processing building under construction in Taichung killed nine people yesterday. The fire, fueled by foam panels, spread rapidly. One person jumped to their death, and firefighters found other victims. Nineteen people were rescued.

AP PHOTO



**Afghanistan** Two highway collisions in Ghazni province killed 50 people and injured 76. The crashes, yesterday [Macau time], involved a passenger bus and an oil tanker. Authorities are treating critically injured patients in Kabul. Traffic accidents remain frequent due to poor road conditions.

AP PHOTO



**Swedish** police joined Chinese-led inspections on a ship in the Baltic Sea near recent undersea cable damage. Suspicions of sabotage persist after last month's ruptures in Swedish waters. Swedish, Finnish, and Lithuanian authorities are investigating the incidents.

AP PHOTO



**China and India** pledged this week to resolve their Himalayan border dispute. Talks emphasized implementing October's border patrol agreement. The military standoff, following a 2020 deadly clash, remains tense. Leaders aim for a phased resolution, reviving cross-border exchanges, including pilgrimages.

More on backpage

**MACAU SAR 25**

# A HIGH-STAKES GAMBLE ON IDENTITY

P4-5, 8-10 P24 EDITORIAL



XINHUA



P23

### GOV'T PROMOTES RELIGIOUS TOURISM INITIATIVES

In response to inquiries from lawmaker Ho Ion Sang, the Macau government has unveiled initiatives aimed at boosting religious tourism, particularly for Muslim visitors. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), outlined strategies to promote the region's cultural and religious heritage. Efforts include a travel brochure for Muslim tourists detailing local customs and recommended itineraries. The government also plans guided tours of key religious sites such as the Statue of Jesus Christ of the Passion, the Anniversary of the Goddess of Mercy, and other themed itineraries, aiming to foster engagement with Macau's history.

### AUTHORITIES FIND 69 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS

In November, joint operations conducted by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Labour Affairs Bureau resulted in the discovery of 69 alleged illegal workers, according to a press statement from PSP. The authorities inspected 142 locations, including construction sites, private buildings, industrial establishments, and commercial premises, leading to the interception of the 69 suspected illegal workers. Officials emphasized their commitment to continuing such initiatives to combat illegal employment practices, reduce criminal activity, and protect vulnerable workers from exploitation.

### CPI RAISES 0.3% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN NOVEMBER

Macau's Composite Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November 2024 increased by 0.3% compared to the same month last year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). However, it saw a slight decline of 0.01% from October. Significant year-on-year price growth was noted in miscellaneous goods and services (2.77%) and Health (1.37%). Conversely, transport prices fell by 3.94%. For the 12 months ending November, the average Composite CPI rose by 0.84%.

### XI IN TOWN

# SECOND DAY WITH AN AGENDA FULL OF VISITS AND MEETINGS

RENATO MARQUES

ON the second day of President Xi Jinping's three-day visit to Macau, China's top official had a packed agenda, which included several meetings and site visits to the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) and the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The day began with a visit to MUST, where President Xi was briefed on the development of two state-level key laboratories at the university—one focused on the quality of traditional Chinese medicine and the other on lunar and planetary science. During the visit, Xi also engaged with teachers, students, and scientific researchers.

After MUST, the delegation traveled to the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, where President Xi met with Macau residents who live and run businesses in the zone, as well as those involved in its planning, construction, management,



President Xi Jinping visits Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin

and services.

In the afternoon, Xi met with representatives from various sectors of Macau's society, during which he expressed appreciation for their contributions to the long-term prosperity and stability of the Macau SAR. He also urged the representatives from local associations and groups to remain united and continue working toward even greater achieve-

ments for Macau.

At this meeting, Xi also interacted with heads of central government agencies and leaders of major mainland-funded companies in Macau. Cai Qi and other senior officials attended, along with the Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Edmund Ho, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, and the

incoming Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, among other local officials.

Later in the afternoon, in one of several meetings, Xi met with John Lee, the Chief Executive of the neighboring Hong Kong region.

They discussed how both regions should strive for greater accomplishments and better development as the practice of 'One country, two systems' enters a new stage. Xi emphasized that the two SARs should learn from one another, strengthen exchanges and cooperation, and work towards a brighter future.

Lee was in Macau to participate in the celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macau SAR and to attend the inauguration of its sixth-term government, which will take place today, and should be attended by 70 foreign representatives.

Xi's day concluded with a gala dinner and a cultural performance at the East Asian Games in Macau.

# Portuguese Consul General optimistic about future presence in Macau

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Portuguese Consul General in Macau and Hong Kong, Alexandre Leitão, has expressed a "realistically optimistic" view about the future presence of Portuguese citizens in the territory, despite recent changes to the city's residency policies.

As cited in a Lusa report, Leitão acknowledged that the presence of Portuguese individuals in Macau was "quite evident" and "relevant," particularly in areas such as associations, law, education, administration, and the courts, where Portuguese



se judges preside. He described this to Lusa as being "unusual" and a "success" that "opens the door to a certain optimism regarding the future."

However, Leitão em-

phasized the need for "realistic optimism" given Macau's status as part of the People's Republic of China. He pointed to opportunities for Portuguese participation in regional initia-

tives like the Greater Bay Area and as a platform for relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as the potential for the Portuguese economy to benefit from internationalizing in Macau.

Leitão also highlighted the "competence and absolutely unique knowledge that the Macanese have of China" as a contributing factor to the city's potential relevance, describing it as a "cocktail that could be very effective."

Last year, Macau authorities stopped accepting new residency applications from Portuguese citizens for "specialized

technical functions," allowing only justifications of family reunion or previous connection to the territory. Leitão said this decision was "a sign" that could be interpreted in different ways, including as an effort towards normalization given Macau's status as part of China.

While acknowledging the sovereign right of the authorities to make such decisions, Leitão expressed his role in defending the interests of the Portuguese community and highlighting their potential to contribute to Macau's growth and diversification projects. According to Leitão, there are around 155,000 people of Portuguese nationality in Macau and Hong Kong, with over 2,200 born in Portugal who live in Macau.

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

## REACHING OUT!

+25,000

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes



MacauDaily 澳門每日時報  
**Times**

DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER\_Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com  
OFFICE MANAGER\_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com  
ADDRESS\_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84  
Advertisement\_advertising@macaudailytimes.com  
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

# Congratulations

on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
the Establishment of Macau SAR  
and the Inauguration of  
Chief Executive Mr. Sam Hou Fai  
and  
the Sixth Term Government of Macau SAR

永利  
Wynn

Twenty-five years after Macau's return,  
the bountiful red lychees hang heavy on the branches,  
symbolizing prosperity in full bloom.

In Qi Baishi's paintings, the lychees cluster closely,  
symbolizing harmonious unity — like Macau and Zhuhai,  
two shining jewels of the Lingnan region, connected by  
shared hearts and aspirations. Together, they walk hand-in-hand  
toward the vibrant future of  
the Greater Bay Area. May the Greater Bay Area flourish,  
opening a new chapter of thriving growth  
and shared prosperity.

Inspired by the works of Qi Baishi in the collection of the Beijing Fine Art Academy.

龍稍鼓旋紅荔枝魚目珠涵白腰漢借徐寅月題畫三百五十年 宣統

蓮開並蒂  
Lotus Blossoms in Pairs

梅結同心  
Plum Blossoms in Clusters

齊白石的藝術世界  
The Artistic World Of Qi Baishi  
Exhibition at Wynn Palace. Free Admission



# A quarter century of change, identity,

NADIA SHAW &  
VICTORIA CHAN

**A**S Macau marks the 25th anniversary of its return to Chinese sovereignty, the city stands at a crossroad, reflecting on transformations that have reshaped its society, identity, and economy.

The transition to the Chinese ruling, which took place Dec. 20, 1999, was marked by the implementation of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration and the Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

These frameworks were designed to ensure a smooth administrative transition while maintaining continuity in Macau's legal system.

The voices of its residents—business leaders, long-time locals, and newcomers—reveal a tapestry of experiences and sentiments about the changes that have unfolded since 1999.

These changes are evident in the remarkable transformations the city has experienced, including the liberalization of gaming in 2002 and the opening of major infrastructures like the 55 km Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) in 2018, the longest bridge-tunnel sea crossing in the world.

Since then, Macau has focused on diversifying its economy by enhancing its culture, heritage, and gastronomy sectors.

In the words of Carlos Álvares, CEO of Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU), "My life in Macau has been an interesting and enriching experience."

He brings focus to the city's multicultural fabric and its unique position as a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Accenting the region's strategic importance in fostering dialogue and economic ties, Álvares notes, "Macau has played an active role in promoting international cooperation."

The transition from Portuguese to Chinese administration brought both opportunities and uncertainties.

António Trindade, president and CEO of CESL Asia, recalls the atmosphere surrounding the handover: "There was a terrible moment of uncertainty in Macau... a lot of question marks about what was going to happen."

Trindade, who has lived in the region for nearly four decades, reflects on how the once quiet streets of Macau have transformed into a bustling hub filled with tourists and business ventures.

In the 25 years, the economic landscape has experienced significant shifts. Once primarily known for its modest gaming establishments, Macau has evolved into one of the world's most prosperous regions.



VICTORIA CHAN

Álvares points out that "Macau has become one of the most prosperous regions in the world," attributing this growth to significant investments in infrastructure and social development.

He notes improvements in quality of life, access to education, and health services as key achievements over the past quarter-century.

Yet, this prosperity has not come without challenges. Trindade emphasizes the need for economic diversification beyond gaming: "We are now participating on a supply of gaming cards... things that nobody thought about in the past."

He argues for a sustainable approach to development that includes nurturing local businesses and reducing dependency on gaming revenues. "The new future government should naturally develop local companies that are non-gaming," he asserts.

Stow also observes generational shifts in work ethic among young people: "The work ethic for the young seems to have changed, with an expectation of easier jobs."

She understands this perspective as a reflection of parents who

The cultural identity of Macau is another focal point in discussions about change.

The region's rich blend of Chinese and Portuguese influences remains a source of pride for many residents. Álvares notes that "Macau is known for its rich mix of cultures," which continues to attract visitors from around the globe.

However, as new developments reshape the skyline, some locals express concern over losing the essence of what makes Macau unique.

Rebecca Choi, vice president at Association of Advertising Agents of Macau and president of International Advertising Association, Macau China, reflects on her own experiences over the past 25 years. "I am incredibly proud to have made Macau my home. It has provided me freedom to work and travel."

**Over the past two decades, Macau has experienced a 'dramatic economic transformation, primarily driven by the liberalization of the gaming industry in 2002'**

worked hard for their children's opportunities. Stow also expresses a desire for greater consideration for employers like her bakery to hire non-locals when necessary: "Selfishly, I would like greater consideration for employers... but there is a gap in the human resources we need."

# economic evolution



António Trindade



Carlos Álvares



Eileen Stow



Rebecca Choi



Rutger Verschuren



Jack Lei



Miguel de Senna Fernandes

Choi highlights how Macau's unique energy fosters passion among its residents. She recalls her early career during the demopolization of Macau's telecommunications business as a pivotal learning experience, saying, "It was exciting to be part of the startup team."

Choi also notes significant changes in job opportunities available today, noting, "There's a wide

range of opportunities for locals and the attraction of overseas young talents to work in Macau." She believes this cross-cultural exchange enhances Macau's vibrancy. Furthermore, she acknowledges improvements in government services that have made life easier for residents. "Department heads are becoming more conscious and proactive in launching programs that meet societal needs."

Despite these concerns about cultural identity and economic sustainability, there is optimism about the future.

The government's commitment to environmental sustainability is seen as crucial for maintaining quality of life amid rapid development.

Álvares acknowledges that while challenges exist, there are also opportunities for improving environmental practices: "Environmental sustainability has been a challenge for Macau, but we are making progress."

As Macau looks forward to another 25 years, leaders like Trindade advocate for a balanced approach to growth. "We need to develop Macau," he urges, emphasizing collaboration among stakeholders to create a more inclusive economy. "It's not against gaming; it's going to be with gaming," he adds.

## TRANSFORMING TOURISM: HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Macau's hospitality sector has also undergone a remarkable transformation. Rutger Verschuren, vice president of Macau Operations for Artyzen Hospitality Group, has witnessed this evolution.

Over the past two decades, Macau has experienced a "dramatic economic transformation, primarily driven by the liberalization of the gaming industry in 2002," Verschuren, also the vice-chairman of the Macau Hotel Association said.

This led to the rise of integrated resorts, blending world-class casinos with luxury hotels, fine dining, shopping, and entertainment.

Tourism has been the cornerstone of Macau's economic development since its return to China in 1999.

Verschuren noted that the designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005 "elevated Macau's profile as a cultural destination, complementing its reputation as the 'Las Vegas of the East.'" As visitor numbers grew, tourism became a key driver for job creation, urban development, and cross-sectoral growth.

Looking ahead, Verschuren sees emerging trends that will shape Macau's hospitality future. He said, "The early 2000s saw a focus on large-scale integrated resorts catering to the gaming industry. Post-pandemic recovery has emphasized personalized experiences, health and wellness offerings, and sustainable practices. The next phase will likely revolve around digital transformation and green initiatives, with a focus on experiences rather than material opulence."

Verschuren also highlighted Macau's role in the Greater Bay Area, noting that it will "bring opportunities to tap into emerging markets like ecotourism, agritourism, and wellness retreats." He envisions a future where Macau and Hengqin

are treated as a "center of tourism and leisure," seamlessly integrated to offer diverse experiences.

## REAL ESTATE MARKET EVOLVES WITH THE TIMES

The city's real estate market mirrors the dynamic economic changes that have shaped the region.

In an interview with the Times, Jack Lei, principal regional sales director of Centaline Property, provides an in-depth analysis of this evolution.

Lei discusses the significant shifts in Macau's commercial real estate landscape over the past two decades. "Before the return, Macau was a small fishing village," he explains. "After the return, we closely examined prices and rents. Although the market has seen declines, current rents and prices are still ten times higher than before."

The introduction of foreign-funded casinos in the early 2000s was a pivotal moment for Macau's real estate market. "In 2004, there was the Sands Casino. Foreign-funded casinos came to Macau, which gave Macau a great help," Lei explained. "As a result, many foreigners and people from all over the world paid attention to the small fishing village in Macau, so the investment atmosphere was quite strong."

This influx of foreign investment and the subsequent growth of the gaming industry had a profound impact on Macau's real estate sector. "Since the entry of foreign casinos, I have seen that both residential and commercial properties in Macau have been doing well, and prices have been rising until 2007, when investment immigration ended," Lei said.

Government policies have also played a crucial role in shaping Macau's real estate landscape. "The most important factor is the influence of the cooling measures," Lei said, referring to the various cooling measures implemented by the government to regulate the market.

"If the economy is good in the market, there is nothing to worry about. But in 2014, the VIP room developed unhealthily and many things happened. The transaction volume kept falling because the fundamental economy was bad."

Despite the challenges, Lei remains optimistic about the future of Macau's real estate market. "Seeing the transaction volume is helpful. Before, there were probably more than 80 residential properties sold, but now it has reached 200 to 300. In addition, I have seen that the transaction volume of shops and office buildings has actually increased compared to last year," he said.

## LOCALS' PERSPECTIVE

A young Portuguese local who has lived in the city his entire life reflects on the remarkable transformation he has witnessed.

"When I was 10 years old, Ma-

cau was very peaceful, very relaxing. There weren't a lot of tourists, and it wasn't very developed, so it was a more relaxed and chill place," said the local, who wished to remain anonymous.

However, the local has observed a dramatic shift in Macau's character over the past 15 years. "Nowadays, reflecting how it's grown and evolved to be a more tourist destination with all these casinos and luxury offerings, I think Macau has changed into a more 'fake' place. I think it's all just for show, which is fair enough because it's part of the business. It's part of the casinos and the hotels' business, and there's nothing you can do about it."

This shift has come at the expense of Macau's local identity, according to the interviewee.

"I think there is still some Macau left from the locals and from the people who have lived here and have grown here who know the true Macau. But of course, nowadays Macau isn't seen as that place – it's more seen as a tourist hotspot."

The local Portuguese influence, which was once a defining characteristic of Macau, has also diminished significantly.

"I don't think it has any influence at all. I think ever since the transition of Macau from Portugal to China, there hasn't been much cultural influence, because now the government is more focused on pleasing China than caring about the Portuguese and their culture."

Looking ahead, the young local sees Macau's development taking a new direction, with the government attempting to shift the city's focus from casinos to its cultural heritage.

As Macau will end of its current 'One country, two systems' arrangement in 25 years, the local expresses excitement about the city's future integration with China.

"25 years from now is actually when Macau supposedly is no longer going to be independent anymore. So, I am excited to see what's going to happen in 25 years, when Macau will fully become a real part of China, instead of its own system. It's something to look forward to seeing what this entails." Miguel de Senna Fernandes, who heads an association representing residents with mixed Portuguese and Chinese heritage, said Macanese people with mixed backgrounds have historically served as a bridge between Portuguese administrators and local Chinese. Fernandes traces his own Portuguese heritage to 1750 when his ancestors arrived in Macau.

As time passes, language, religion and identity are at risk of being lost along with food traditions. To keep Macanese heritage alive, the Macanese need to embrace their uniqueness, Fernandes said.

"We are from Macau," he said. "We are different from the Chinese, but we should embrace the differences."

TOURISM

# November visitor arrivals surge 9.6%

MACAU'S visitor arrivals surged 9.6% year-on-year to 2,832,041 in November 2024, recovering to 97.3% of the level in the same month in 2019, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The increase was driven by a 14.1% rise in same-day visitors to 1,548,454 and a 4.6% growth in overnight visitors to 1,283,587. The average length of stay held stable at 1.2 days, with overnight visitors staying 2.3 days on average.

Visitors from mainland China, the region's largest source market, increased 11% to 1,965,651, with those traveling under the Individual Visit Scheme growing 6%. Visitors from the Greater Bay Area cities also rose 13.7% to 962,497.

International visitor arrivals surged 20.9% to 241,057, rebounding 7% from November 2019 levels. Key source markets included the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which saw double-digit growth.

Visitor arrivals by land, representing 80.2% of the total, grew 10.3% year-on-year, led by strong performance at the Border Gate, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, and Hengqin checkpoints.

In the first eleven months of 2024, Macau welcomed 31,888,313 visitors, a 26.2% increase from the same period in 2023 and recovering to 87.8% of the 2019 level. VC

AD

MICE

# FIA TO HOLD ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN MACAU FOR FIRST TIME

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2025 Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) annual conference will be held in Macau for the first time, the global motorsports governing body announced.

According to the announcement, the 2025 Extraordinary General Assemblies (EGA) and FIA Conference will take place from June 10 to 13, 2025.

This major event will bring together representatives from national motorsports federations and associations, as well as various FIA committees and subcommittees, for four consecutive days to discuss upcoming plans, regulations, and developments in motorsports.

The conferences and side meetings will be held at the Galaxy International Convention Centre, in partnership with the Automobile General Association Macao-China (AAMC) and Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG). The FIA expects over 500 senior delegates from 147 countries to attend.

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem commented, "Macau is an exciting, multicultural region, the perfect setting for the FIA to unite our Member Clubs from across the world. My thanks



to the AAMC and GEG for hosting us, and I look forward to a successful conference and EGA."

Chong Coc Veng, chairman of the AAMC, added, "We are delighted that the 2025 FIA Conference will be held in Macau. The city is a unique destination that preserves its multicultural heritage, offering a blend of gastronomy, cultural events, and motorsport, including the prestigious Macau Grand Prix and FIA World Cups. June is also the perfect time to visit Macau, enjoy its diverse cuisines, and explore its world heritage sites that combine Chinese and Portuguese influences."

Francis Lui, chairman of GEG, also commented, "We believe Galaxy Macau is the ideal venue for the FIA Conference and General Assemblies. Macau's strategic location in the heart of Asia, its global accessibility, rich cultural heritage, and deep appreciation for motorsport, cultivated through 71 years of the Macau Grand Prix, combined with our world-class hotels, will ensure a warm welcome for delegates from around the world."

This year, the event took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, followed by the FIA General Assemblies held last week in Kigali, Rwanda.

**CHEISEA GARDEN**  
倫敦人美饌園

**Delight in diverse delicacy and surprises**

Embark on a culinary adventure.

[ OPEN 24 HOURS ]

Level 1, Londoner Grand

Scan for details

CONGRATULATIONS ON  
THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THE MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION AND  
THE INAUGURATION OF MR. SAM HOU FAI AS  
THE SIXTH TERM CHIEF EXECUTIVE



## XINHUA FOCUS

# Thriving Macau dispels doubts about 'one

WANG AIHUA & XU LINGUI,  
XINHUA

**F**OR centuries, the quiet city of Macau, nestled next to Hong Kong, has rarely captured as much attention as it does today.

In less than a week, this wealthy and culturally vibrant Chinese territory will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland, which ended centuries of Portuguese occupation.

Since 1999, Macau has been governed under the "one country, two systems" policy -- a unique arrangement that allows it to maintain its capitalist system and way of life within socialist China.

The concept was first pro-

posed by late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s to reunify the country, initially with Taiwan in mind. It was later implemented in China's two special administrative regions (SARs) of Hong Kong and Macau following their handovers from colonial powers in the late 1990s.

Despite early skepticism, Macau has disappointed naysayers, emerging as a model of the policy's success.

Once known as a "casino city" and a frequent backdrop for gangster films, it has transformed into a bustling hub, celebrated for its economic vitality, low crime rates, and exceptional public welfare. This year, Forbes magazine ranked Macau the second-richest place

on Earth, trailing only Luxembourg.

Luo Weijian, a law professor at the University of Macau, attributed the city's success to its strong relationship with central authorities, efficient political system, rapid economic growth, significant improvements in living standards, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse ethnic groups.

**PATRIOTISM AND DEMOCRACY**

According to Luo and other observers, Macau has developed a strong relationship with the central authorities and has benefited extensively from the vast resources and strategic opportunities provided under the "one country" framework.

"Over the past 25 years, the country has regarded Macau as a jewel in its palm, always serving as the strongest backing for Macau's prosperity and stability, and consistently providing the greatest opportunities for its development," said Macau SAR Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

Support can take the form of essential resources, such as a steady supply of freshwater, or something Macau, with a size merely over 20 square kilometers at the time of the return, needs most for development -- space.

The central government approved Macau's land reclamation plans and granted it administration over 85 square kilometers of surrounding wa-

ters. In 2021, an in-depth cooperation zone was established to deepen collaboration between Macau and Guangdong Province. The zone, on the island of Hengqin, spans more than three times the land area of Macau.

Ieong Tou Hong, a member of the Executive Council for the fifth-term government of the Macau SAR, said the drastic changes in Macau's coastline and skyline are a vivid embodiment of the central government's staunch support.

On the other hand, Macau has faithfully upheld the central government's overall jurisdiction, safeguarding the very foundation of "one country."

It completed legislation on safeguarding national security

XINHUA PHOTOS



An aerial drone photo shows the Macau Peninsula (front)



An aerial drone photo shows a view of the Lotus Bridge connecting south China's Macau and Hengqin



Fireworks illuminate the sky in Macau



# country, two systems'

in as early as 2009. Putting in place a new principle required by central authorities that only patriots were allowed to run, it successfully held the election of the 7th Legislative Assembly in 2021. The chief executive election two months ago offered yet another example.

Kou Hoi In, president of the Legislative Assembly, recalled an almost unanimous agreement among legislators regarding the national security law. "While differing opinions may exist on certain livelihood issues, there is a consensus that the prosperity of the country comes first," Kou said.

Observers said Macau has built an efficient political system over the years, where the chief executive plays the lea-

ding role while the administrative, legislative and judiciary powers operate as mutual checks and balances, yet in a cooperative way.

The legislature, for example, is by no means a "rubber stamp" as unfairly portrayed by some in the West. The majority of legislators win their seats through competitive elections. People who observed the elections said they are no less lively than those in Western countries -- campaigns feature parading vehicles with loudspeakers, and polling stations witness long queues starting from early mornings.

During questioning sessions, legislators may confront the chief executive directly or submit their inquiries in writing, to

which the government is obliged to respond. Face-to-face questioning sessions are streamlined live by local media.

"The practice of 'one country, two systems' in Macau is based on the city's own situation, which is different from Hong Kong, let alone the West, either in economic or in political terms," said Luo, the university professor.

## GROWTH OF ECONOMY AND PUBLIC APPROVAL

Chinese political philosophy has long highlighted the importance of public approval. Lin Guangzhi, a local cultural researcher, said "Macau did it."

He said attaining a high level of public satisfaction has been a key factor in Macau's smooth governance.

Lin noted that before 1999, the people of Macau loathed Portuguese colonial rule marked by bureaucracy, economic stagnation, and poor public safety.

Under the "one country, two systems" policy, Macau has secured strong support from its motherland, China, and the right to govern by the people of Macau themselves. Both are key to addressing Macau's ills of the past.

But the success recipe under the policy is more than what the "one country" can offer. Macau has leveraged the advantages of the "two systems," retaining the benefits of its capitalist system, including a more open economic model and thriving entertainment and leisure industries, particularly the gaming sector.

It is in striking comparison to the situation on the mainland where the Criminal Law punishes whoever gathers people to engage in gambling, runs a gambling house or makes gambling his profession for the purpose of profit.

Over the past quarter-century, the "one country, two systems" policy has driven Macau's rapid economic growth. Compared with 1999, its per capita GDP more than quadrupled to around 70,000 U.S. dollars in 2023. That took place generally in parallel with the mainland's economic take-off, but on a different path.

And the economic boom has trickled down to benefit the majority of the local population. The government has spent generously to improve accessibility and affordability of high-quality housing, healthcare and education. It is a much safer place as well, with violent

crimes such as kidnapping, murder, and aggravated assault being either non-existent or extremely rare.

Zhang Jie, who moved to Macau from the mainland six years ago, said she feels confident enough to let her six-year-old daughter walk to school by herself. "Macau is extremely safe."

With concerns about maintaining their capitalist lifestyles and interests dispelled, Macau is now a kaleidoscopic city, with both opulent luxury hotels and commercial complexes that claim the world's top spots, and residential neighborhoods with older buildings giving locals the kind of common touch they desire.

Pansy Ho Chiu-king, a billionaire businesswoman from Macau, said in a recent interview that Macau people have a genuine sense of gaining in the city's socio-economic and cultural boom.

Jose Chan Rodrigues, a Macau-born Portuguese, said Portuguese cultural elements such as the language and architecture have mostly been preserved in Macau.

"In 1999, I was still a child. My father told me not to worry. He said things will turn better. And they did," Rodrigues told Xinhua.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said Macau during his five-year term has made new progress in diversifying its economy to reduce heavy reliance on the gaming industry, aiming to build itself into a world tourism and leisure center. Sectors like traditional Chinese medicine, modern finance, sci-tech, exhibitions and conventions, and culture and sports are booming.

"Macau's development over the past 25 years has demonstrated that the 'one country, two systems' policy is fully applicable, achievable, and popular," Ho said.

Looking ahead, Sam Hou Fai, Macau's incoming top official, said Macau will take an even more active role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area development, and advance the building of Hengqin.

He said Macau will also consolidate its position as a key platform for China to cooperate with Portuguese-speaking countries, home to some 250 million people across Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In July, China unveiled a new reform package, highlighting the need to harness the institutional strengths of the "one country, two systems" and facilitate the active roles of Hong Kong and Macau in the opening up of the whole country.

"This creates extensive space and opportunities for the future development of Macau," Sam said.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

Few places in the world are as multifaceted as Macau, where diverse cultural and ethnic groups live in concentrated communities on a land area of slightly over 30 square kilometers.

The historic center of Macau, a UNESCO world heritage site, offers a convincing testimony -- it bears witness to one of the earliest and longest-lasting encounters between China and the West.

The narrow and elongated area is dotted with historic buildings, from the A-Ma Temple dedicated to the sea-goddess Mazu, to the Mandarin's House -- the former residence of a prominent Chinese historical figure, and the landmark Ruins of St. Paul's, once among the largest Catholic churches in the Far East.

From Mazu and Jesus to the Buddha, their disciples may live next door to each other, and their sacred worshipping spaces may be visible within sight.

Wu Zhiliang, president of the Macau Federation of Cultural Circles, hailed the city as a "laboratory for human civilizations."

"From capitalism to Confucianism and socialism, from Macau-born Portuguese to mainlanders and expats from Southeast Asian countries, Macau has always been at the forefront of cross-cultural exchanges, but rarely with clashes," Wu said.

Macau people also demonstrate a more balanced attitude toward work and life than Hong Kong or the mainland's top-tier cities, attracting an increasing number of visitors. "This perhaps is why the city has remained so inclusive and newcomers generally feel more welcomed than they had expected," said Zhang Jie.

When the idea of "one country, two systems" was first proposed, few likely expected it to succeed so well in Macau, which was, at that time, the most inconspicuous compared with Hong Kong and Taiwan.

As Deng Xiaoping once famously stated, "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." The "one country, two systems" policy is an ongoing experiment that continues to evolve. When implementing it, efforts should always suit local conditions. In this regard, Macau has undoubtedly emerged as a successful pioneer.

Zheng Yongnian, a renowned political scientist, said Macau's current success under "one country, two systems" is not its ceiling, but rather "a new beginning and starting point."



People enjoy an open-air concert at Macau Cultural Center Square



Tourists visit the Ruins of St. Paul's



Tourists visit the Senado Square in Macau

# A LEGAL LEGACY IN LIMBO

LYNZY VALLES

The handover of Macau marked a significant transition on December 20, 1999, establishing a legal framework intended to ensure stability and continuity.

Yet, as time passed, the initial laws and regulations began to falter under the pressures of a rapidly evolving society.

Lawyer Sérgio de Almeida Correia highlights this struggle, noting that the lack of political will to modernize the legal system hindered Macau's development for years.

Fortunately, he adds, recent shifts in the authorities' mindset have sparked a wave of fundamental legislative reforms aimed at revitalizing the region's legal sector.

Correia commented, "These changes became outdated over time, and for many years, there was no political will to modernize the legal system and the courts, which was detrimental to Macau's development."

The legal expert believes that the new Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, who will be inaugurated today, will play a key role in modernizing the legal system.

"He is well-prepared and knowledgeable about the legal and administrative challenges facing society," said Correia. However, he also pointed out



Sérgio de Almeida Correia



Jorge Menezes

RENATO MARQUES

that it will be more difficult to count on the Legislative Assembly due to the low technical and legal-political expertise of many of its members.

Reflecting on the evolution of Macau's legal system since the handover, the legal expert noted that changes have been minimal and often poorly executed. He specifically highlighted issues with the Land Law, which has led to significant problems.

Only in recent years has there been a genuine political will for reform, leading to improvements like the dematerialization of judicial processes and the modernization of registries. For Correia, these reforms have been long overdue due to previous leader-

ship failures and inadequate preparation.

Meanwhile, critics argue that the initial promise of autonomy has been overshadowed by a lack of democratic reforms. "The principle of 'One country, two systems' failed because democracy was not granted alongside autonomy," stated lawyer Jorge Menezes.

## LEGISLATIVE FAILURES

The "erosion of liberties in Macau" is attributed to both insufficient legislation and the harsh enforcement of existing laws, according to Menezes.

The lawyer pointed out that violations of fundamental rights—such as the right to protest, freedom of the press, and

political participation—have impacted the exercise of freedoms.

Just last month, the Macau Journalists Association (AJM) has voiced concerns about the restrictions on press freedom in the city, calling on the government to withdraw unnecessary reporting limitations.

In a statement, the AJM highlighted several recent incidents that illustrate a troubling trend in the erosion of press freedom, noting that it is witnessing a systematic preclusion of various media outlets from covering government-hosted events.

Regarding the introduction of the national security law, Menezes stated that the law effectively makes every citizen

a potential target for prosecution.

"Criticism and the expression of opinion can be construed as crimes under the security law," he warned, emphasizing the law's vague nature.

Menezes observed, "This led to self-censorship and a less engaged community," reflecting a broader trend where fear of repercussions hampers open discussion on important issues.

Looking ahead, Menezes expressed skepticism about Macau's prospects over the next 25 years. He pointed to the Greater Bay Area initiative—a major economic project—as a potential risk to Macau.

"The legal border with China would ensure Macau's distinctiveness," he explained, but breaching that protection could lead to further integration with China's culture and economy, diminishing Macau's uniqueness.

For Correia, while he stresses the importance of integration with mainland China and the Greater Bay Area, he insists that laws must be clear and well-crafted to avoid ambiguity. He advocates for skilled individuals to be involved in this process to promote development without creating barriers to investment or compromising Macau's identity.

"The next 25 years do not appear promising," Menezes concluded, urging a reassessment of how Macau can preserve its unique identity moving forward.

## MACAU AT 25

# From sleepy monopoly to world's biggest gaming market

LYNZY VALLES

MILLIONS of visitors from around the world flock to Macau each year, a city that has evolved from a quiet destination into the "Gambling Capital of the World." This gaming boom has not only reshaped the city but also transformed the lives of its residents, ushering in a new era.

In 2002, after the end of a four-decade monopoly held by Stanley Ho's Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), the government liberalized the gaming sector, granting multiple concessions to various operators. This change sparked an unprecedented boom, with revenues soaring and Macau surpassing Las Vegas in gambling income by 2007.

The influx of foreign investment and the introduction of large-scale casinos transformed Macau into a vibrant entertainment destination, often referred to as the "Las Vegas of the East."

As the only region in China where casino gambling is permitted, Macau quickly surpassed Las Vegas in gross gaming revenue within five years and has maintained its lead, with a brief decline during the Covid-19 pandemic. While gaming-related taxes contribute about 35% of government revenue in Las Vegas, Macau's latest figures indicate a staggering 81% reliance on this sector.

Gaming expert Ben Lee remarked that the industry has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past 25 years,



Ben Lee

evolving "from a sleepy monopoly into the largest gaming market in the world." Once known primarily for its limited gaming options, Macau has now established itself as a global hub for cutting-edge gaming technology and practices.

However, Lee noted that after two decades, "We are still trying to come to grips with some of the challenges we initially faced, the primary one being the ille-

gal flow of funds from the mainland to Macau."

Lee, managing partner at gaming consultancy IGamiX Management & Consulting, added, "To date, I don't believe we have managed to resolve that prickly dilemma of how to sustain the industry on the one hand but cut off the illegal funds channeling on the other," he told the Times.

Macau has been keen on diversifying its eco-

nomy, moving away from a reliance on gaming as the sole source of income—requiring gaming operators to make significant investments in other areas. The six casino operators agreed to invest a total of MOP118.8 billion as part of the 10-year operating licenses, with the majority of the funds pledged for non-gaming projects.

City officials have also designated six historic

areas for revitalization to boost the local economy.

Two years into their 10-year concessions, gaming operators have already established a schedule of concerts, conferences, and global sporting events.

Looking ahead, there is an expectation for a renewed focus on diversifying investments beyond gaming. This includes encouraging concessionaires to invest in non-gaming sectors and potentially in capital projects on Hengqin, which could help stabilize and sustain Macau's economy.

"I expect we will see a redoubling of efforts to cajole and guide the concessionaires into investing more into the non-gaming sector, maybe even hard capital investments in Hengqin island," the expert concluded.

**CONGRATULATIONS ON  
THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MACAO SAR  
AND  
MR. SAM HOU FAI'S INAUGURATION AS  
THE SIXTH-TERM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF  
THE MACAO SAR**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# THE GREATER BAY AREA AND SHIPPING IN THE SPOT

ANALYSIS  
BY SPLASH

**T**HE Greater Bay Area, Beijing's attempt to unite nine cities in Guangdong with Hong Kong and Macau into an economic powerhouse and rival the New York metropolitan area and the San Francisco Bay Area, has been discussed many times but, according to experts, is still as exciting a prospect for Hong Kong as ever.

The Greater Bay Area comprises of Hong Kong, Macau, and nine municipalities of Guangdong, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, and Zhaoqing in Guangdong province. The total area is around 56,000 sq km and based on the data from 2023, it has over 86 million people and a GDP of almost \$2trn.

To put this in perspective, the Greater Bay Area alone is just behind Canada in terms of GDP and ranks 11th in the world. Beijing sees the creation of the area as a key part of the country's development plans but the same can be said for Hong Kong.

"Hong Kong sees deeper integration with the GBA as essential for its future, greatly enriching the life chances of its people. For example in Shenzhen, right next door to Hong Kong are headquartered three of the most innovati-

ve tech companies in the world – BYD, one of the world's largest EV companies; Huawei, one of the largest makers of cellphones and infrastructure for the internet; and Tencent, which is the company behind WeChat, the world's biggest super-app," says Richard Hext, chairman of Vanmar Shipping.

Gautam Chellaram, the executive chairman of KC Maritime, believes the same thing. He says that the initiative could create significant opportunities for the maritime industry, including enhanced trade connectivity, infrastructure development, and increased demand for shipping services.

"With its strategic location and well-established infrastructure and expertise in maritime technology, Hong Kong is poised to play a pivotal role in facilitating the transportation of goods within the Greater Bay Area. The initiative also presents opportunities for collaboration on technological advancements and sustainable practices within the shipping industry," Chellaram says.

The KC Maritime man adds that the Greater Bay Area will foster economic integration, improve connectivity, and stimulate growth across various sectors.

This means that the road ahead is not yet fully clear. Cara Carter, global managing director

of Halcyon Recruitment, thinks the most exciting prospect for Hong Kong is to see how it will fit into China's overall growth strategy.

The area will also, hopefully, provide a united front for all those involved in the project and that could, with a little bit of coordination, result in less

internal competition and more towards markets outside the GBA.

"We see that there should be more coordination at gover-



## CATL is planning a major expansion of battery swapping for electric vehicles

ON THE AGENDA

**T**HE world's largest maker of batteries for electric vehicles said this week it will get into battery swapping in China in a big way starting next year.

The idea behind battery swapping is to refuel quickly, similar to filling a conventional car with gas. Instead of waiting for the batteries to recharge, one swaps out the old ones with a block of fresh ones at a swap station.

China-based CATL announced plans to open 1,000 swap stations next year in China, including in Hong Kong and Macau, with a long-term goal of 10,000 stations built with partners. If the company follows through, it could rival Nio, a 10-year-old Chinese electric car brand that has opened more than 2,700 stations and has plans for at least 5,000.

Nothing on that scale exists elsewhere in the world, though



A driver gets his car battery swapped at a first generation station by China-based CATL battery manufacturing company, in Xiamen

Nio has about 60 swap stations in northern Europe. Such a large investment is possible in China, where government support has transformed the world's largest auto market into a heavily electric one and made the country a leader in EV technology.

"By 2030, battery swapping, home charging, and public charging stations will share the market," Robin Zeng, the CEO of

CATL, predicted at a splashy presentation in southeast China's Fujian province, where CATL is based. He appealed to corporate partners to work together to "build more convenient, more economical and safer services for customers, promoting a brand-new way of life."

Battery swapping faces hurdles. It requires a standardization of the battery pack so the

swap stations can handle it, and most EVs have their own configuration. Conversely, an electric car can use any charging station in China because all use a common plug, and fast-charging technology is reducing the time for a recharge.

JingYang, a Fitch Ratings director who focuses on China's auto and renewable energy sectors, said automakers may be concerned that adopting a standard battery pack could cede too much control of their supply chain to others. But some may want to test the waters to see if battery swapping can improve sales, and doing so with CATL or Nio could reduce the cost, she said.

China auto market analyst Lei Xing believes that swapping can complement the country's well-developed charging network. "I don't see it becoming mainstream, but I do see it becoming a key part of that infrastructure landscape," he said.

Michael Davidson, a renewable energy expert at the University of California, San Diego, believes that charging will dominate "and maybe there'll be some battery swapping options mixed in there."

The concept has proven easier to implement with fleet vehicles — taxis, buses and commercial trucks — that have a standard model and, in some cases, stick to set routes. CATL, which launched a small pilot project two years ago aimed at taxis, will start its rollout with fleets and expand to individual car owners later, said Zhang Kai, the deputy president of CATL's battery swapping subsidiary.

Swapping is still faster than fast-charging. The CATL station, branded EVOGO, can change a battery pack in 100 seconds, said Yang Jun, the CEO of the subsidiary. Time is money for taxi and truck drivers, Lei said.

Wang Wubing, a driver at China's popular Didi ride-hailing service, said at an EVOGO station in the city of Xiamen that he swaps batteries to save time so he can pick up more customers. But it is more expensive than charging.

Both CATL and Nio have announced agreements with automakers to use their swap stations. The question is whether enough automakers and drivers adopt it to raise use of the stations to a profitable level. **MDT/AP**

# LIGHT

ment-level so that we could achieve growth for all ports in GBA and Hong Kong can focus on competition against other international transshipment markets



such as Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, etc.," says Horace Lo, group managing director of Modern Terminals Limited.

This is not seen as the only possible outcome. Gary Wong from Hill Dickinson, a law firm, sees a possible double-edged sword situation. He does see a noticeable increase in competitiveness between the ports in the GBA and thinks the competition can be a good incentive for positive change. But it could also do something completely different.

"Other than the physical proximity of Hong Kong and its GBA counterparts, developments across the GBA also means upgrades and advancements in various mainland Chinese ports. Cooperation between GBA ports will only foster mutual improvement, but can also mean that other ports within the GBA could be more attractive to specific stakeholders," Wong says.

The Greater Bay Area region is the largest urban corridor in the world but each city within it has a different specialisation which is mutually beneficial and where collaboration and good connectivity would be key.

Greater connectivity facilitating the flow of goods, services and people generally has a positive effect on trade, shipping, and logistics activities, according to Firoze Mirza, managing director of BSM Hong Kong. This can, in turn, boost Hong Kong's maritime industry as infrastructure

development progresses and the massive economic potential is being used to the fullest.

"With Hong Kong's more limited supply of land and status as an international maritime centre, the extension of port and maritime services further afield offers potential for growth alongside the establishing of operational synergies with the GBA's two other major container ports – Shenzhen and Guangzhou," says Bjorn Hojgaard, CEO of shipmanagement firm Anglo-Eastern.

He sees trade being done faster and cheaper forging increa-

sed demand between markets, especially if it is coupled with the Belt and Road Initiative and implementation of more digital technology solutions. According to Hojgaard, sea transportation and ports will be the central part of the equation.

"Assuming tighter alignment, Hong Kong's strengths in high value-added services including ship management, ship finance, ship leasing, marine insurance, maritime law and dispute resolution services could also be leveraged, creating expanded business opportunities for Hong

Kong companies," he adds.

Another positive of this in his eyes is the possibility of a massively increased talent pool which could be found across the border as well as perspectives of cross-pollinating innovation in the sector.

This, however, will be a slow process, which Hojgaard concedes as well as saying that there are still many unanswered questions. All those questions will be answered in the coming decade as we head towards 2035 when the Greater Bay Area is supposed to be fully developed. **MDT/SPLASH**

## CHINA MERCHANTS SIGNS FOR NEWCASTLEMAX NEWBUILD BRACE

**C**HINA Merchants Energy Shipping (CMES) has struck a lease deal for a pair of scrubber-fitted newcastlemax bulker newbuilds delivering in 2026.

The Shanghai-listed diversified shipping arm of China Merchants Group said in a filing it would be paying around \$100m to take 210,000 dwt vessels on charter from China Merchants Financial Leasing for five years.

CMES has been renewing its fleet in several segments and currently has a large shipbuilding programme, either independently or in partnership with leasing outfits, that includes bulkers, car carriers, some



of the largest LNG carriers, and the world's first methanol dual-fuel VLCC.

The company, which has a series of newcastlemax bulkers

on order at domestic yards, said that locking in a certain number of new vessels of the same type will help to cope with the future market supply and demand.

# Vietnam an important partner of Greater Bay Area

**IN THE NEWS**  
**BY LAN DO,**  
**THE INVESTOR**

**T**HROUGH Hong Kong, an international financial center, Vietnamese businesses can more easily and effectively access the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay, says Sunwah Group chairman Jonathan Choi.

Choi made the statement at the Ho Chi Minh City and Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Investment & Business Forum in HCMC this week.

Choi is also chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, chairman of the GBA Entrepreneurs Alliance, and chairman of the Hong Kong-Vietnam Chamber of Commerce.

In this trip to HCMC and Hanoi from December 15 to December 21 to explore business opportunities, he led a delegation of 60 business

leaders and experts from the GBA.

Economic and trade relations between the GBA and Vietnam have grown increasingly close, making Vietnam an important partner in the region.

Through Hong Kong - an international financial center - Vietnamese enterprises can more efficiently and effectively access the GBA market and other regions in mainland China. This also allows them to benefit from the GBA's strengths, such as its position as a global financial hub, free economic environment, robust legal system, and professional services, Choi stressed.

"Moreover, the potential for cooperation between the GBA and Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, is tremendous. Vietnam's rich cultural heritage, stable political environment, well-developed infrastructure, and comprehensive human resource training system pro-



Sunwah Group chairman Jonathan Choi speaks at the Ho Chi Minh City and Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Investment & Business Forum

vide a strong foundation for growth," he told the forum.

By combining the GBA's technological strengths with Vietnam's dynamic workforce, the GBA can expect to implement more collaborative projects in areas like artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and green technology. Such initiatives will drive both economies toward a future of innovation and sustainable development, Choi added.

Vo Van Hoan, Vice Chairman of the HCMC People's Committee, noted that the cooperative relationship between Vietnam and the GBA in particular and China in general continues to see significant development in many fields, especially in economics, trade, investment, and tourism.

Currently, Vietnam continues to hold the position of China's largest trading partner in ASEAN and the four-

th-largest trading partner of China, the U.S., Japan, and South Korea.

China is Vietnam's largest import market and the second-largest export market. According to data from the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), in the first seven months of 2024, investment from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region into Vietnam reached \$2.19 billion, and from mainland China reached \$1.64 billion, according to Hoan.

China also leads in the number of projects implemented in Vietnam.

Previously, Chinese FDI into Vietnam mainly focused on the processing and manufacturing industry, furniture, footwear, and garment production. Chinese investment is now shifting towards high-tech industries, components and parts for industrial production, electronics, automobiles, and green energy. HCMC is the locality

with the highest number of Chinese investment projects (731 projects).

Hoan emphasized that HCMC, a special city, achieved a GDP growth rate of 7.17% in 2024, accounting for 27% of the national budget contribution. "With a population of nearly 10 million and an expanding middle class, HCMC represents a vast and highly potential market for Chinese businesses, especially those from the GBA."

Cao Thi Phi Van, deputy director of the Investment and Trade Promotion Center of HCMC (ITPC), highlighted the advantages of HCMC, including its strategic location, an area of over 2,000 square kilometers, and a population of over 10 million.

HCMC possesses many factors that attract international investors. It is also the core city and growth pole of the southeastern region, equipped with a complete network of modern roads, railways, waterways, and air transport, facilitating better connectivity both regionally and internationally. **MDT/THE INVESTOR**

## CHINA-US

# Beijing refutes Pentagon's report on Chinese 'nuclear force expansion'

LOLITA C. BALDOR,  
WASHINGTON

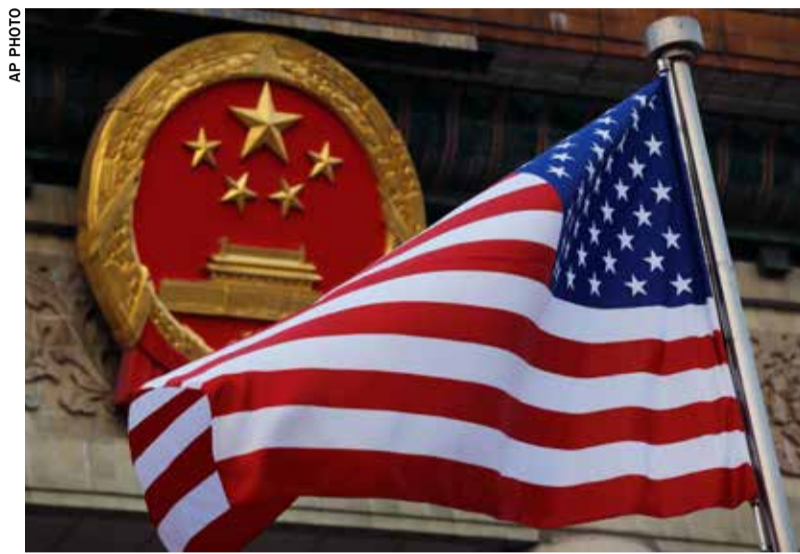
**C**HINA is expanding its nuclear force, has increased military pressure against Taiwan and has strengthened its ties with Russia over the past year, according to a Pentagon report yesterday [Macau time] that details actions accelerating key areas of conflict with the United States.

The Chinese Embassy, in response, said China has always "firmly adhered to a nuclear strategy of self-defense," follows the no-first-use nuclear policy and maintains its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security.

Liu Pengyu, the embassy spokesman, said such annual reports by the Pentagon are "filled with 'Cold-War' thinking and zero-sum game mentality, which China firmly opposes."

The report notes that the recent rash of corruption allegations within China's powerful Central Military Commission, which oversees the People's Liberation Army, is hurting Beijing's military growth and could slow its campaign to modernize.

The impact, said a senior defense official, is a bit of a mixed bag because while there has been progress in some



programs, China has slid back in others.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the U.S. assessment, warned that Beijing is working toward developing a more diverse and technologically sophisticated nuclear force. While the expected number of nuclear warheads has maintained consistent growth, China is broadening its targeting abilities.

Beijing is going to be able to go after more and different types of targets, do greater damage and have more options for multiple rounds of counterstrikes, the official said. The U.S. is urging China to be more transparent about its nuclear program, while also warning that America will defend

its allies and take appropriate steps in response.

According to the report, which provides the annual U.S. assessment of China's military power and is required by Congress, China had more than 600 operational nuclear warheads as of May, and the U.S. expects it will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

The Biden administration has worked to maintain a balance with China, building up the U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to be ready to counter Beijing while also encouraging increased communications between the two countries at the diplomatic and military levels.

That uptick in talks has coincided with a decrease in coercive and risky intercepts of U.S.

aircraft since late 2023, compared with the previous two years. China still, however, does what the U.S. military considers "unsafe" flights near American and allied forces in the region.

The Pentagon's national defense strategy is built around China being the greatest security challenge for the U.S., and the threat from Beijing influences how the U.S. military is equipped and organized for the future.

The corruption within the PLA has resulted in at least 15 high-ranking officials being ousted in a major shakeup of China's defense establishment.

"This wave of corruption touches every service in the PLA, and it may have shaken Beijing's confidence," the report said.

In June, China announced that former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor, Wei Fenghe, were expelled from the ruling Communist Party and accused of corruption. Last month, another senior official, Miao Hua, was suspended and put under investigation, according to China's Defense Ministry.

The U.S. report points to a persistent increased military presence by China around Taiwan. It said China's navy has been in the region more and that there have been increased crossings into the island's

air defense identification zone and major military exercises in the area.

Just last week, a large deployment of Chinese navy and coast guard vessels in the waters around Taiwan triggered alarm as Taiwanese officials said it looked like China was simulating a blockade. Officials have said there were as many as 90 ships involved in what Taiwan described as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China.

The self-ruled island has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic U.S.-China war.

More broadly, the report concluded that the PLA continued its drive to develop greater military capabilities but "made uneven progress toward its 2027" milestone for modernization.

One area of expansion, the report said, is with unmanned aerial systems, which officials said are "quickly approaching U.S. standards."

Regarding Russia, the report said China has supported Russia's war against Ukraine and sold Russia dual-use items that Moscow's military industry relies on. Dual use items can be used for both civilian and military purposes. **MDT/AP**

## OVERSEAS CHINESE

## Manhattan man pleads guilty to helping establish secret Chinese police station

**A** Manhattan resident has pleaded guilty to helping establish a secret police station in New York City, "on behalf of the Chinese government."

Chen Jinping, 60, entered the guilty plea on a single count of conspiracy to act as an agent of a foreign government in Brooklyn federal court yesterday [Macau time].

Matthew Olsen, an assistant attorney general in the U.S. Department of Justice, said Chen admitted in court to his role in "audaciously es-



A six story glass facade building (center) alleged to be the site of a foreign police outpost for China in New York's Chinatown

establishing an undeclared police station" in Manhattan and attempting to conceal the effort when approached by the

FBI.

"This illegal police station was not opened in the interest of public safety, but to further the

nefarious and repressive aims of the PRC in direct violation of American sovereignty," he said in statement.

Prosecutors say Chen and his co-defendant, Lu Jianwang, opened and operated a local branch of China's Ministry of Public Security in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood starting in early 2022.

The office, which occupied an entire floor of the building, performed basic services, such as helping Chinese citizens renew their Chinese dri-

ver's licenses, but also identified pro-democracy activists living in the U.S., according to federal authorities.

The clandestine Chinese police operation was shuttered in the fall of 2022 amid an FBI investigation. But in an apparent effort to obstruct the federal probe, Chen and Lu deleted from their phones communications with a Chinese government official they reported to, prosecutors said.

China is believed to be operating such secretive

police outposts in North America, Europe and other places where there are Chinese communities. Beijing, however, has denied that they are police stations, saying that they exist mainly to provide citizen services such as renewing driver's licenses.

Lu, who is due back in court in February, had a longstanding relationship with Chinese law enforcement officials, according to prosecutors.

Over the years, they say, the Bronx resident, who was also known as Harry Lu, helped harass and threaten a Chinese fugitive living in the U.S. and also worked to locate a pro-democracy activist in California on behalf of China's government. **MDT/AP**

CONGRATULATIONS ON  
THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MACAU SAR OF  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND  
THE INAUGURATION OF  
THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE MR. SAM HOU FAI  
AND THE SIXTH-TERM GOVERNMENT OF MACAU SAR



星際酒店  
StarWorld Hotel



[WWW.GALAXYENTERTAINMENT.COM](http://WWW.GALAXYENTERTAINMENT.COM)

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

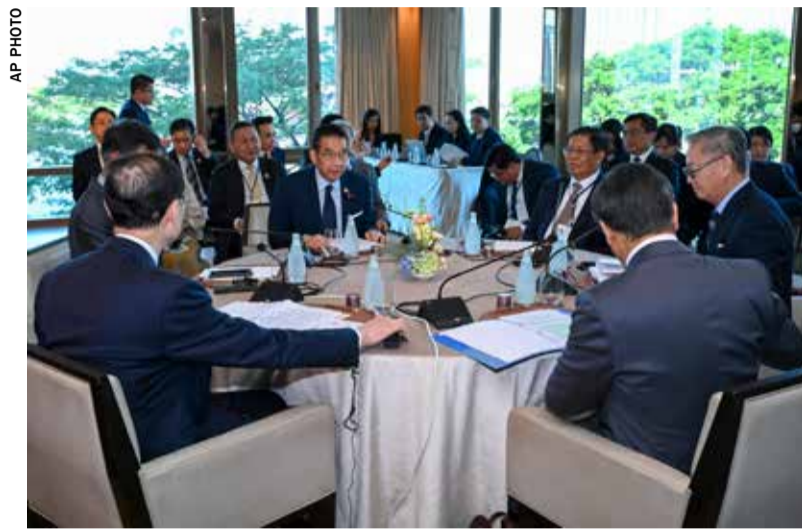
# THAILAND HOSTS REGIONAL TALKS TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO MYANMAR'S BLOODY CIVIL WAR

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI,  
BANGKOK

**T**WO days of meetings on Myanmar's violent political crisis began yesterday in Bangkok, the latest in a long series of regional talks that have made no headway in restoring peace to the war-torn Southeast Asian nation.

Myanmar has been wracked by violence since its army in February 2021 ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and violently repressed peaceful pro-democracy protests, leading to the establishment of an armed resistance movement. The military government has used harsh tactics, including air strikes, to suppress its opponents, but the war has only become fiercer, especially in the past year.

Yesterday's discussions were attended by foreign ministers and high-level representatives from Myanmar and its neighbors, Laos, China, India, Bangladesh and host Thailand. Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa described their talks as important because it



was the first time that Myanmar and all five of its neighbors had met together.

Myanmar's neighbors, fearing regional destabilization, particularly the massive movement of refugees from the fighting, have made numerous efforts to promote a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, has taken the lead in efforts to restore peace in Myanmar. Its members, excepting Myanmar, will hold talks

in Bangkok today.

ASEAN in early 2021 agreed on a "five-point consensus" for peace, but the military leadership in Myanmar did virtually nothing to implement it, frustrating the group's fellow members to the extent they have barred leading members of Myanmar's ruling military from attending their meetings.

The peace plan calls for the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar, a dialogue among all concerned parties, mediation by an

ASEAN special envoy, provision of humanitarian aid through ASEAN channels, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties.

Only a very limited Thai-led effort of providing cross-border aid came to fruition. Thailand is widely seen as taking a conciliatory attitude toward Myanmar's military government, which is condemned by many countries for its brutal war and suppression of democracy.

The six nations attending Thursday's meeting "agreed that direct engagement with Myanmar is critical and necessary," said Thailand's Maris. "They see the value of meeting regularly. And they share the same understanding, more so than other countries, because they are direct neighbors directly impacted by the situation in Myanmar."

Thai officials said yesterday's talks "were held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, with a frank and constructive exchange of views, in areas related to border security and combatting transnational crime, particularly illicit drugs and online scams."

They said Myanmar Foreign Minister Than Swe informed them about the military government's political roadmap, focused on elections planned for next year.

Critics of the Myanmar government of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing have expressed dissatisfaction at conciliatory approaches to his regime.

"Rather than 'two-track' diplomacy, Thailand is engaging in two-faced diplomacy - signing up to ASEAN statements seeking to condemn and isolate the junta, while at the same time quietly attempting to usher the junta back into the regional fold," said Patrick Phong-sathorn, senior advocacy specialist at Fortify Rights, a human rights group specializing in Myanmar affairs.

"As the junta's atrocities escalate, the effects of which have had a massive regional spill-over, ASEAN must be steadfast in its rejection of Min Aung Hlaing and his cabal and any attempt to solidify their position through the sham elections planned for next year," he said. **MDT/AP**

AD



*CENTRO MEDICO PEDDER*

• 仁德醫療中心 •



*We bring high quality of medical service to Macau*

**General Surgery** : Dr. Fok Manson, Dr. Lai Cheuck Seen Edward, Dr. Lau Wing Kee Peter, Dr. Kwong Man, Dr. Nie Fu Zhong, Dr. U Chong San, Dr. Lei Chin Chong

**Breast Surgery** : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

**Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

**Paediatric Surgery** : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

**Paediatrics** : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

**Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

**Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin

**Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine** : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

**ENT** : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

**Cardiology** : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

**General Medicine** : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

**Dietitian** : Chan Lai U Joey

Avenida da Praia Grande No 599, Edifício Comercial Rodrigues 14 e 15 Andar, em Macau  
 T. 2832 2298 / 2832 2229 Website: www.peddermacau.com  
 Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 10:00 - 19:00 Sat 10:00 - 14:00 Sun & PH closed

## VIETNAM

## US arms manufacturers could help Hanoi build up its armed forces

**U**NITED STATES weapons manufacturers could work with Vietnamese counterparts to help build up Vietnam's armed forces, the U.S. ambassador to the southeast Asian country said yesterday.

"Our goal is to ensure that Vietnam has what it needs to defend its interests at sea, in the air, on the ground and in cyberspace," U.S. Ambassador Mark Knapper said at an international arms expo in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi.

Vietnam is hosting the expo that brings together 250 exhibitors including geopolitical rivals including the U.S., China, Russia, Ukraine, Israel and Iran. The expo, held at Hanoi's Gia Lam airport, continues through Sunday.

U.S. exhibitors include Boeing and Textron

Aviation. China is present with Norinco and Gaodu International Trade. Iran's defense ministry pavilion isn't far from booths set up by Israeli companies Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries. A number of Russian firms are also in attendance along with Ukraine's Motor Sich.

Vietnam has been trying to increase its domestic arms manufacturing while reducing its reliance on Russia for weapon imports.

In 2022, Russia made up around 60% of all of Vietnam's military purchases, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. But Vietnam's longstanding efforts to diversify its imports have been accelerated by the war in Ukraine.

It has also been trying to boost its own capacity to make arms and displayed indigenously-made military equipment at the expo.

A key driver for Vietnam is the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, a key trade and security route. It a flashpoint in Asia and a fault line in the U.S.-China regional rivalry. Vietnam has been critical of China's increasingly hostile actions in the disputed waters. Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries have overlapping claims in the busy sea passage.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh called the event "message of peace, cooperation and development." He was later given a tour of a military plane made by U.S. firm Lockheed Martin. **MDT/AP**



Congratulations on  
the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
the Establishment of Macao SAR

and  
the Inauguration of  
the Chief Executive of Macao SAR –  
Mr. Sam Hou Fai



MELCO  
新濠

STUDIO CITY  
新濠影滙

CITY OF DREAMS  
新濠天地

ALTIRA  
新濠鋒

[www.melco-resorts.com](http://www.melco-resorts.com)

# *Congratulations*

on the 25th anniversary  
of the establishment of the  
Macau Special Administrative Region

## **BNU**

Banco Nacional Ultramarino  
大西洋銀行

**Congratulations on  
the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Establishment of Macau SAR**

With Compliments

**CTM** 



Congratulations on the  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment  
of the Macau SAR and to  
Mr. Sam Hou Fai  
on His Inauguration as the  
Sixth-term Chief Executive



USA

# Washington effort to curb China's and Russia's access to advanced computer chips 'inadequate'

AAMER MADHANI,  
WASHINGTON

**T**HE Commerce Department's efforts to curb China's and Russia's access to American-made advanced computer chips have been "inadequate" and will need more funding to stymie their ability to manufacture advanced weapons, according to a report published yesterday [Macau time] by the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

The Biden administration imposed export controls to limit the ability of China and Russia to access U.S.-made chips after Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago.

The agency's Bureau of Industry and Security, according to the report, does not have the resources to enforce export controls



AP PHOTO

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal

and has been too reliant on U.S. chip makers voluntarily complying with the rules.

But the push for bolstering Commerce's export control enforcement comes as the incoming Trump administration says it is looking to dramatically

reduce the size and scope of federal government. President-elect Donald Trump has tapped entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to lead a new "Department of Government Efficiency" to dismantle parts of the federal government.

The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report.

BIS's budget, about \$191 million, has remained essentially flat since 2010 when adjusted for inflation.

"While BIS' budget has been stagnant for a decade, the bureau works diligently around the clock to meet its mission and safeguard U.S. national security," Commerce Department spokesperson Charlie Andrews said in a statement in response to the report.

Andrews added that with "necessary resources from Congress" the agency would be "better equipped to address the challenges that come with our evolving national security environment."

In a letter to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, chair of the subcommittee, pointed to news reports of the Russian military continuing to acquire components from Texas Instruments through front companies in Hong Kong to illustrate how the export controls are failing as an effective tool.

Blumenthal in a statement called on "Commerce to take immediate action and crack down on the companies allowing U.S.-made semiconductors to power Russian weapons and Chinese ambition."

Texas Instruments said it opposes the use of its chips in Russian military equipment and the illicit diversion of its products to Russia.

"It is our policy to comply with export control laws, and any shipments of TI chips into Russia are illicit and unauthorized," the company said in a statement. "If we find evidence indicating product diversion, we investigate and take action."

It's not just Texas Instruments that's the issue. The subcommittee in September published a report that found aggregated exports from four major U.S. advanced chip manufacturers nearly doubled from 2021 to 2022 to Armenia and Georgia.

Both of those countries are home to front companies known to assist Russia in acquiring advanced chips made in the U.S. despite export controls.

China, meanwhile, has created "vast, barely disguised smuggling networks which enable it to continue to harness U.S. technology," the subcommittee report asserts.

Washington has been gradually expanding the number of companies affected by such export controls in China, as President Joe Biden's administration has encouraged an expansion of investments in and manufacturing of chips in the U.S. MDT/AP

AD

律師事務所



C&C  
LAWYERS  
& NOTARIES  
SINCE 1996



### 合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha ° 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues ° 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata ° 趙魯 Zhao Lu °\* 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

### 大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia °  
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues  
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques  
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo  
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel  
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves  
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins  
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °  
莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura  
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos  
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos  
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo  
陳芷喬 Joana Chan

### 大律師 ASSOCIATES:

顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan  
諾瑪莉 Maria Noras  
康靜雅 Viviana Hong  
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon  
黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong  
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo  
吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong

### 實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

陳健雄 Eurico Chan  
戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng  
吳佩愉 Ng Pui U  
陳子健 Kimi Chan

### 法律專家及外地註冊律師

JURISTS AND LAWYERS  
QUALIFIED IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS:  
林思潔 Jessie Lin  
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues  
楊詩婷 Si Teng leong

### 法律專家 JURISTS:

張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong  
伍福賢 Domingos Ng  
許栢桓 Rui Fernandes Brás

WWW.CCADVOG.COM  
TEL: (853) 2837 2642/ 2837 2623

° 私人公證員 Notary Public \* 中國委託公證人 China Appointed Attesting Officer



C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER  
"DEIGNAN AWARD"  
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
IN MACAU (2023)



AP PHOTO



Soja Safadi (center) with her sisters, tries to see their other sister, Sawsan, who is inside the buffer zone that separates the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights from Syria

MIDDLE EAST

# ASSAD'S FALL SPURS HOPE FOR FAMILIES SPLIT BY GOLAN HEIGHTS BUFFER ZONE

ELENA BECATOROS,  
MAJDAL SHAMS

**T**HE four sisters gathered by the side of the road, craning their necks to peer far beyond the razor wire-reinforced fence snaking across the mountain. One took off her jacket and waved it slowly above her head.

In the distance, a tiny white speck waved frantically from the hillside.

"We can see you!" Soha Safadi exclaimed excitedly on her cellphone. She paused briefly to wipe away tears that had begun to flow. "Can you see us too?"

The tiny speck on the hill was Soha's sister, Sawsan. Separated by war and occupation, they hadn't seen each other in person for 22 years.

The six Safadi sisters belong to the Druze community, one of the Middle East's most insular religious minorities. Its population is spread across Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Golan Heights, a rocky plateau that Israel seized from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981. The U.S. is the only country to recognize Israel's control; the rest of the world considers

the Golan Heights occupied Syrian territory.

Israel's seizure of the Golan Heights split families apart.

Five of the six Safadi sisters and their parents live in Majdal Shams, a Druze town next to the buffer zone created between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria. But the sixth, 49-year-old Sawsan, married a man from Jaramana, a town on the outskirts of the Syrian capital, Damascus, 27 years ago and has lived in Syria ever since. They have land in the buffer zone, where they grow olives and apples and also maintain a small house.

With very few visits allowed to relatives over the years, a nearby hill was dubbed "Shouting Hill," where families would gather on either side of the fence and use loudspeakers to speak to each other.

The practice declined as the internet made video calls widely accessible, while the Syrian war that began in 2011 made it difficult for those on the Syrian side to reach the buffer zone.

But since the Dec. 8 fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime, families

like the Safadis, are starting to revive the practice. They cling to hope, however faint, that regime change will herald a loosening of restrictions between the Israeli-controlled area and Syria that have kept them from their loved ones for so long.

"It was something a bit different. You see her in person. It feels like you could be there in two minutes by car," Soha Safadi, 51, said Wednesday after seeing the speck that was her sister on the hill. "This is much better, much better."

Since Assad's fall, the sisters have been coming to the fence every day to see Sawsan. They make arrangements by phone for a specific time, and then make a video call while also trying to catch a glimpse of each other across the hill.

"She was very tiny, but I could see her," Soha Safadi said. "There were a lot of mixed feelings — sadness, joy and hope. And God willing, God willing, soon, soon, we will see her" in person.

After Assad fell, the Israeli military pushed through the buffer zone and into Syria proper. It has captured Mount Hermon, Syria's tallest mountain, known as

Jabal al Sheikh in Arabic, on the slopes of which lies Majdal Shams. The buffer zone is now a hive of military and construction activity, and Sawsan can't come close to the fence.

While it is far too early to say whether years of hostile relations between the two countries will improve, the changes in Syria have sparked hope for divided families that maybe, just maybe, they might be able to meet again.

"This thing gave us a hope ... that we can see each other. That all the people in the same situation can meet their families," said another sister, 53-year-old Amira Safadi.

Yet seeing Sawsan across the hill, just a short walk away, is also incredibly painful for the sisters.

They wept as they waved, and cried even more when their sister put their nephew, 24-year-old Karam, on the phone. They have only met him once, during a family reunion in Jordan. He was 2 years old.

"It hurts, it hurts, it hurts in the heart," Amira Safadi said. "It's so close and far at the same time. It is like she is here and we cannot reach her, we cannot hug her." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1973 SPANISH PRIME MINISTER ASSASSINATED



The Spanish Prime Minister, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, has been killed in a car bomb attack in Madrid.

The 70-year-old, his bodyguard and a driver died instantly and four other people were injured after a remote-controlled bomb was detonated as he passed.

A massive explosion sent the car hurtling into the air and over the roof of the San Francisco de Borja Church where Mr Blanco had just been attending mass.

The vehicle landed on the second floor terrace of a building on the other side of the church and a great deal of damage was caused in the area.

No one has admitted carrying out the attack.

The Spanish Government has declared three days of national mourning and the cabinet has held two emergency meetings.

All public buildings are closed but it is not known if a state of emergency will be declared.

Police did not confirm the prime minister had been assassinated until six hours after the attack. They said the killers had dug a tunnel under the street the admiral used regularly on his return from mass.

Police said the killers triggered the bomb from an opposite basement in a well-planned assassination bid.

The prime minister's death came 15 minutes before the start of a trial involving 10 of Spain's leading opponents of the Franco regime, one of them a Roman Catholic priest.

They were arrested in a Madrid Church 18 months ago and were accused of unlawful assembly.

Thousands of angry demonstrators have campaigned against the case and have already clashed with police.

Commentators said the admiral's death must be seen in the context of this controversial trial and against the backdrop of his staunch support of General Franco's regime.

Not since the Civil War, which ended in 1939, has a government minister died in such violent circumstances.

The former naval officer, who was considered authoritarian and hated Communism, was devoted to the Roman Catholic Church.

He has been succeeded by the vice-prime minister Fernandez Miranda, 57.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Basque nationalists were blamed for the murder in retaliation for the execution of Basque militants in Spain.

Luis Carrero Blanco had only been prime minister for about six months when he was assassinated. In June that year Franco had separated the duties of chief of state and head of government and Mr Blanco became prime minister.

He had been influential in improving links with monarchist groups, and his appointment as head of state was considered to be part of a process to restore the monarchy under Juan Carlos.

Mr Blanco was opposed by many for propping up Franco's hard line regime, stifling opposition and for opposing mainstream European political life despite the country's progress in tourism and trade.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Someone attractive is saying nice things about you. Fortune smiles on your romantic prospects. Share some fun with both love. Celebrate a milestone together.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Get into domestic arts and joys. Creative ideas abound. Share some beauty, comfort and relaxation with family and friends. Prepare something scrumptious to share.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Find creative outlets to advance a cause you feel passionate about. Listen to a wider conversation. Edit communications to clearly express your heart.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Extra income is available. Creative work can pay well. Push beyond old limits. Invest in your business. You can get the resources you need.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Get a lucky personal break. You're attractive and charismatic. Score an achievement, milestone or win. Make profitable plans to realize a dream.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Find a quiet place to think. Nature inspires you. Consider hopes, wishes and visions. Prioritize health and happiness. You're drawn to love magnetically.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 A team or community effort comes together harmoniously. Answers, solutions, resources and support flow through your social channels. Connect for a common cause.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Your reputation precedes you. All the pieces seem to be coming together in a professional puzzle. Work your magic. Use your skills, talents and tricks.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Stretch your wings and expand your horizons. Things come together easily. Stay flexible. Your past work reflects you well. Discover new gems and treasures.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Position yourself for financial growth. Review the data and keep accounts updated and organized. Discuss priorities with your partner. Give thanks and stay in action.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Whisper sweet nothings with your partner. Talk about love, dreams and visions. You can realize the possibilities that light you both up. Collaboration sparkles.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Accept coaching from someone who sees your blind spots. Get farther than expected toward a health or fitness goal. Practice. Great results are possible.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

EASY					EASY+														
3	7		8		6	4				3	1		7	6	9				
			9	4		5	1					1					7		
	9	5	1								6	8		3					5
5			3					1	6			9			4				7
			8	5		4	2						2	6	4				
9	2				8				7	8	5						1		
					6	7	4			5			4		8	6			
2		9		5	1						3						2		
7	8			3		1	2					6	9	5				4	1

MEDIUM					HARD														
		7			5		6			6	9		5			4			
1			6	2			9						3			2			
	9																		
7			5		1					2	1		7						
	2		6		3					3		1						5	
		5		9			8											9	
							5			8			9	4					
7			3	9					4							1			
5	3				9														

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-6	4	cloudy
Changchun	-14	-8	fine
Chengdu	3	9	cloudy
Chongqing	8	12	cloudy
Fuzhou	7	18	fine
Guangzhou	7	20	fine
Guiyang	2	8	overcast
Haikou	15	21	cloudy
Hangzhou	2	9	fine
Harbin	-19	-13	fine
Hefei	-3	8	fine
Nanjing	0	9	cloudy
Shanghai	3	9	fine
Taipei	12	16	rain
Wuhan	-3	9	fine
Hong Kong	16	18	fine
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	1	3	snow
Frankfurt	3	7	cloudy
Paris	7	8	rain
London	5	9	rain
New York	0	4	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Ancient Semitic for "Lord"; 5- Chiller; 8- Wind indicator; 12- First name in scat; 13- Collection of maps, Titan of Greek mythology; 15- Cake finisher; 16- Phooey!; 17- Gawk; 18- Throb; 19- Leaping insect; 22- Sue Grafton's "\_\_\_ for Evidence"; 23- Addams Family cousin; 24- Banister; 26- Scoffs; 29- Regard; 31- Tic-tac-toe win; 32- Taj \_\_\_; 34- Shaft shot from a bow; 36- About, in memos; 38- Fenced areas; 40- Gutter site; 41- Brit's bottle measure; 43- Staggers; 45- Vietnamese holiday; 46- Curd stuff; 48- Leased; 50- Beak; 51- Frat letters; 52- Opposite of paleo-; 54- Question a decision; 61- Blame; 63- Move rhythmically; 64- Charge per unit; 65- \_\_\_ account (never); 66- Primitive weapon; 67- Let's just leave \_\_\_ that; 68- Actor Beatty and others; 69- Man-mouse link; 70- Droops;

DOWN 1- Titanic's undoing; 2- Banned apple spray; 3- Neighbor of Sask.; 4- Timmy's dog; 5- Sock \_\_\_ me!; 6- Put your hands together; 7- Tombstone name; 8- By means of; 9- Increase in speed; 10- "M\*A\*S\*H" soft drink; 11- "\_\_\_ Tu": 1974 hit; 13- Smokers receptacle; 14- Crystal ball users; 20- Flower part; 21- Pro \_\_\_; 25- Able was \_\_\_; 26- \_\_\_ boom; 27- Headed toward the Arctic; 28- Stock unit; 29- Born before, senior churchman; 30- Shifted; 31- Petroleum; 33- Exist; 35- Rainy, say; 37- \_\_\_ saw Elba; 39- Thin; 42- Morays; 44- Cozy; 47- Vehicles with runners; 49- Trouble, slangily; 52- Middy; 53- Feminine ending; 55- Mob boss; 56- Lulu; 57- Final Four org.; 58- I could \_\_\_ horse!; 59- Adult male deer; 60- Hardens; 62- Plea at sea;

**Yesterday's solution**

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	

**It's prime time to BUY & RENT!**

**jml property**

CONTACT US & SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY!

hello@jmlproperty.com  
 www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @jmlproperty

**Hoi Wan Retail (Taipa)**  
 HKD 12,980,000

**Tou Un (Taipa)**  
 HKD 2,750,000 1 bed 1 bath

**Jade Garden (Taipa)**  
 HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION  
 OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
 AND  
 THE INAUGURATION OF  
 THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE MR. SAM HOU FAI  
 AND THE SIXTH-TERM GOVERNMENT OF MACAO SAR



HERITAGE GASTRONOMY

# Preserving Macau's fusion cuisine with recipes passed down generations

A crack of fire under a sprawling wok, a dab of soy sauce and a splash of Chinese rice wine. Bursts of aroma from spices sourced from around the world sizzle as a chef prepares Minchi, a dish of fried minced meat with diced potatoes topped with a sunny-side-up egg. This is one of the most iconic comfort foods for the Macanese.

Restaurateur Manuela Sales da Silva Ferreira's hopes to ensure her grandmother's version of dishes like Minchi are not forgotten, using recipes passed down through generations at her eatery, Restaurante Litoral.

In the 25 years since Portugal returned its trading outpost to China, Macau has become known for its glittering, luxurious casinos and nightlife. But as the city evolves, old restaurant owners retire and outlets close and some people fear Macanese traditions and authentic



Manuela Sales da Silva Ferreira, owner of the family-run Restaurante Litoral, puts egg yolk on a crabmeat shell in a kitchen of her restaurant

cuisine could disappear.

Macanese food is a mix of Portuguese and Chinese cooking, combined with flavors and ingredients that Portugal imported from its other colonies, from Brazil to Mozambique, Goa to East Timor. UNESCO called Macau "home of the first 'fusion food,'" blending

Western and Eastern cuisine.

Ferreira's paternal ancestors arrived from Portugal more than 400 years ago. She decided to pack her bags and leave in 1995, just four years before the Portuguese administration would end. But a sudden fear that Macanese cuisine could be lost pulled her back to her home city.

"At that time, I was already married with children and even my children didn't ask what Macanese cooking is," she said. "If I don't do anything, Macanese cooking will be lost."

That was when she opened her own restaurant.

Ferreira said she believes her family recipes derive from

home cooking after centuries of Portuguese wives tried to replicate familiar dishes using local Chinese ingredients, while Chinese wives tried to recreate Portuguese cooking for their interethnic families.

Her own favorite is baked crabmeat, which she learned from her mother. While the original version in Portugal could have been crabmeat mixed with cream and pickles, served cold, the recipe has evolved while being passed down the generations and crossing oceans. Ferreira now serves it hot, baked in crab shells.

The city of Macau on the southeast coast of China has a population of around 684,000. Ethnic Chinese make up 89.4% of the population while Portuguese, Portuguese-Chinese and other mixed Portuguese residents account for just 1.9%, according to the most recent census conducted in 2021. MDT/AP

AD



**Warmest Congratulations**  
on the  
of Macao's Return to the Motherland

**25<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary

澳門彩票有限公司  
macau-slot.com



**OPINION**

**Editorial**

Paulo Coutinho



**A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD**

As Macau marks the 25th anniversary of its return to Chinese sovereignty, the city's story is one of striking transformation, with economic triumphs interwoven with societal and political complexities.

Its metamorphosis from a quiet Portuguese-ruled enclave to the world's largest gaming hub has cemented its place on the map. Yet, the path forward remains fraught with questions about sustainability, identity, and freedom.

The liberalization of Macau's gaming industry in 2002 catalyzed a meteoric economic rise. Once a sleepy port, Macau now rivals global economic powerhouses, with a per capita GDP surpassing \$70,000.

Flashing casinos and integrated resorts have drawn millions of tourists annually, generating wealth that has uplifted living standards, enhanced public welfare, and enabled cash handouts funded by gaming tax revenues. Infrastructure advancements like the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and the light rail system exemplify this prosperity.

However, the glittering façade masks deep challenges. Macau's reliance on gambling revenues has stifled economic diversification. While government leaders tout plans to expand into Chinese medicine, finance, technology, and cultural industries, progress has been sluggish. Residents lament that the city's economic boom has not translated into sustainable or innovative local businesses, leaving Macau vulnerable to external shocks, as evidenced during the pandemic.

Social consequences add another layer of complexity. The wealth generated has come at a cost to work-life balance and family structures. Casino jobs, though lucrative, often entail irregular hours and added stress, forcing parents and children into fragmented schedules. Younger generations, disillusioned by limited career and leisure options, frequently dream of opportunities beyond the confines of their crowded, tourist-dominated city.

Politically, Macau's integration with China has brought both stability and tighter controls. While the "one country, two systems" framework has preserved aspects of Macau's capitalist system and cultural identity, Beijing's influence has grown significantly.

Pro-democracy activists have left the city, disheartened by restrictions on dissent and a populace increasingly reliant on central government solutions. National security laws and constraints on media and freedom of expression further underscore Macau's shrinking political space.

Despite these issues, public sentiment is mixed. Many residents praise the government's efficiency, public safety, and welfare measures, such as universal healthcare and housing improvements. For some, the annual cash handouts are emblematic of a city that, while imperfect, has undeniably improved since its colonial days.

As Macau looks toward the next 25 years, the challenges of balancing growth with sustainability, and prosperity with freedom, loom large. The city's leaders must reckon with its overdependence on gaming, nurture innovation, and create opportunities that resonate with its young people.

Equally important is safeguarding Macau's unique cultural heritage—a fusion of Chinese and Portuguese influences—that risks being overshadowed by relentless modernization.

Macau's transformation is a testament to ambition and resilience, but its future requires a pivot toward inclusivity, diversity, and civic engagement. Whether it can achieve this balance will determine if Macau continues to shine as a model of "one country, two systems" or becomes a cautionary tale of unchecked growth and lost identity.

**FOR AIRPORTS, BACKGROUND MUSIC NO LONGER IS AN AFTERTHOUGHT**

Background music is no longer an afterthought at many airports, which are hiring local musicians and carefully curating playlists to help lighten travelers' moods.

London's Heathrow Airport built a stage to showcase emerging British performers for the first time this summer. The program was so successful the airport hopes to bring it back in 2025.

Nashville International Airport has five stages that host more than 800 performances per year, from country musicians to jazz combos.

In the Dominican Republic, Punta Cana International Airport greets passengers with live merengue music.

Tiffany Ildart and her two nieces were delighted to hear musicians during a recent layover at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Airports are also carefully curating their recorded playlists. Detroit Metro Airport plays Motown hits in a tunnel connecting its terminals.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in Texas has a playlist of local artists compiled by an area radio station.

Singapore's Changi Airport commissioned a special piano accompaniment for its giant digital waterfall.

Music isn't a new phenomenon in airport terminals. Brian Eno's "Music for Airports," helped define the ambient music genre.



Julianne Moore (right) and Tilda Swinton in a scene from "The Room Next Door" (Sony Pictures Classics)

**DRIVE IN**

**WITH 'THE ROOM NEXT DOOR', ALMODÓVAR MAKES A LIVELY MOVIE ABOUT DEATH**

JAKE COYLE/AP FILM WRITER

FILMS that are straightforwardly about death are rare, but movies that are about both death and sex are rarer, still.

In Pedro Almodóvar's "The Room Next Door," the Spanish director's first English-language feature film, Julianne Moore plays Ingrid, a celebrated author who's just written a book about death. She's at a book signing in New York when she hears that an old friend, a war correspondent named Martha Hunt (Tilda Swinton), has been diagnosed with cancer.

Ingrid rushes to Martha in the hospital, and the two friends, who haven't seen each other in years, quickly get reacquainted. Soon, Martha's cancer worsens and she asks Ingrid to assist her in self-euthanasia. "The cancer can't get me if I get the cancer first," she says.

Why not ask someone she's closer with? Well, she has, Martha says, but for various reasons none of them are willing. With an illegal pill bought from, as she says, "the dark web" and a slight conspiratorial vibe that they're commit-

ting a crime together, they travel to a modernist house in upstate New York where Martha plans to end her life. She'll be comforted, she believes, having Ingrid just down the hall. Martha doesn't want any fuss, just a nice time. "As if we were on vacation," she says.

"The Room Next Door," the title of which plays off Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own," is about finding dignity and contentment with death as a natural part of life, and, perhaps, the mystery of the relationships that end up mattering the most. The one thing Martha and Ingrid share is a former lover (played by John Turturro), who turns up again in clandestine meetings with Ingrid. He's preoccupied with environmental disaster and the death of the planet, but fondly recalls sleeping with Martha as "like having sex with a terrorist - it always felt like the last time."

No one besides Almodóvar can get away with lines like this, in any language.

Not all of this works, even if every bit of "The Room Next Door" feels conjured — as is typical of Almodóvar's thickly laye-

red films — from a fully fleshed-out emotional terrain. (Here, he adapts Sigrid Nunez's 2020 American novel, "What Are You Going Through.") There's an awkward and overdone flashback early in the film when Martha recalls her painful history with the father to her estranged daughter. Some of the dialogue can sound stilted.

But what absolutely, undoubtedly does work is Moore and Swinton together. If some of the more melodramatic or crime-movie flourishes feel forced, the central relationship of "The Room Next Door" is consistently provocative. Swinton, in particular, is extraordinarily deft at finding Martha's singular equilibrium: on the brink of death but still alive to so much — books, movies, the conversation of a friend. Death is coming, so best to spend what's left in good company.

"The Room Next Door," a Sony Pictures release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for thematic content, strong language and some sexual reference. Running time: 110 minutes. ★★☆☆

**THE BUZZ**



**Russian** President Vladimir Putin, at his annual news conference yesterday, touted gains in Ukraine despite setbacks. He highlighted military advancements and suggested peace talks but maintained demands. Putin also addressed Russia's economy, claiming stability amid inflation and geopolitical tensions.



**Israel-Yemen** Israel's airstrikes yesterday targeted Houthi-controlled ports and energy facilities in Yemen, killing at least nine people. The strikes follow Houthi missile launches at Israel. Israeli officials warned against aggression, escalating tensions in the Red Sea corridor and Yemen's broader conflict.



**French** President Emmanuel Macron visited cyclone-hit Mayotte yesterday and pledged medical and humanitarian support as recovery efforts ramp up. Cyclone Chido caused devastation, killing 31 and leaving thousands without essentials. Residents called for aid amid fears of unreported deaths.



**USA** Auto industry suspended a recall of 49 million ARC airbag inflators after industry feedback questioned their defects. Previous ruptures caused fatalities and injuries. Regulators plan further investigations to assess risks before deciding on next steps, citing technical discrepancies in manufacturing processes.

**HOLIDAY TIMES**

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Tuesday December 24. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.