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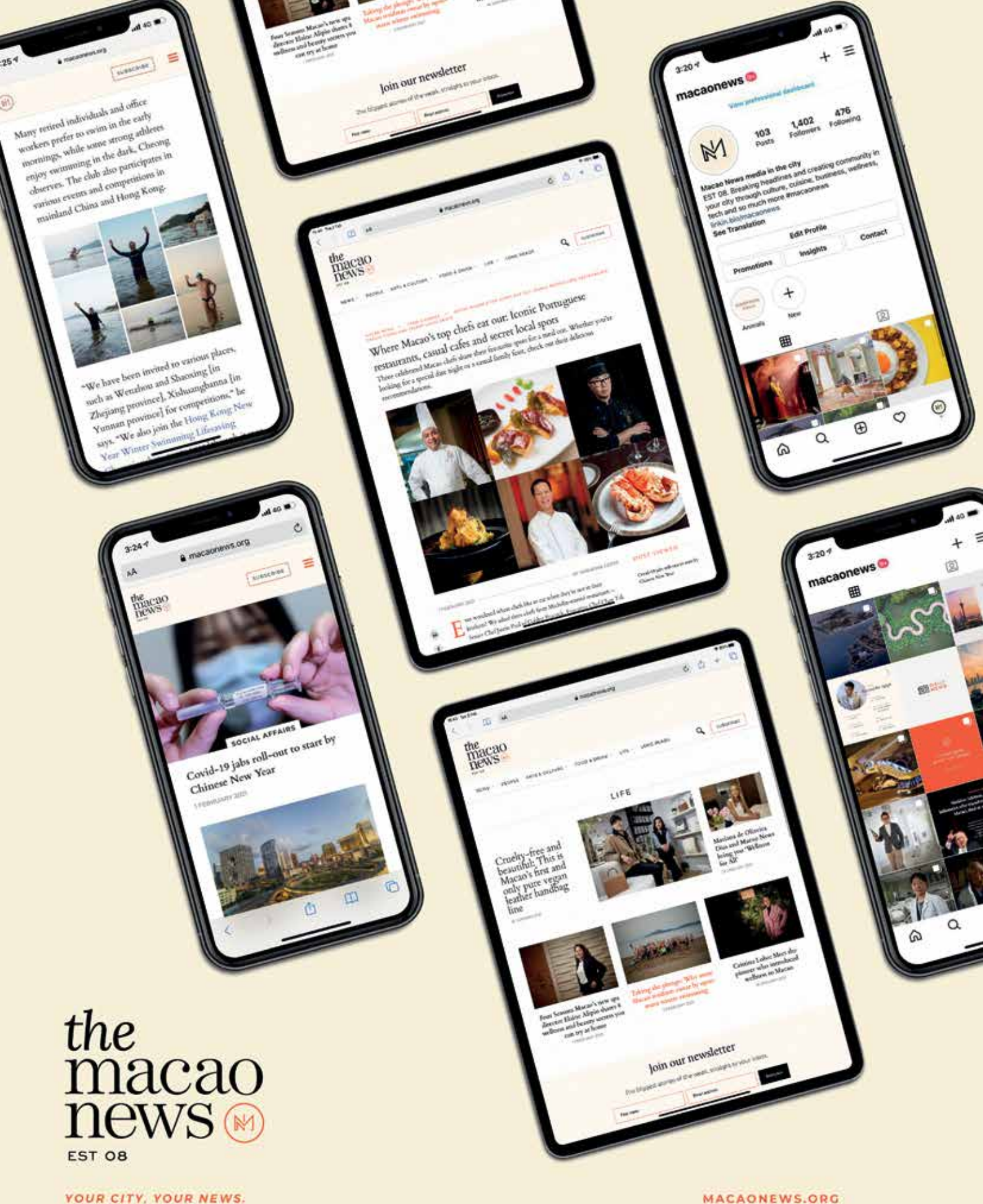
Making us better

Macao's ever-growing Traditional Chinese Medicine industry

+ COVID-19 vaccinations pick up pace

+ Visit Hengqin's newest pioneer in wellness





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Dragon Images

TCM and the city

Traditional Chinese Medicine has been practiced for more than 2,000 years but now Macao is ramping up its own TCM industry as a way to diversify its economy. We look at the city's ever-growing relationship with this ancient holistic approach to health. **p.10**



Government Information Bureau

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Cover image Dr Zhou Hua, dean of the Faculty of Chinese Medicine at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), in his laboratory with TCM ingredients and products. Image taken by by Ant nio Sanmarful



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From the Editor

All eyes on Hengqin

Macao's neighbouring island of Hengqin dominates our feature stories in this issue of Macao Magazine. In our cover story, we look at the city's ever-increasing focus on the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry in a bid to diversify its economy – and much of this focus is on the Guangdong-Macau Traditional Chinese Medicine Technology Industrial (GMTCM) Park on Hengqin. We also visit a new wellness destination – Serensia Woods – on the island, which is set to open later this year. Hengqin is becoming a key location for TCM, health, tourism and Macao's economic diversification as recently reaffirmed by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

On the subject of the Chief Executive, at a recent meeting in Beijing, Ho was extremely clear in pointing out that Macao should seize the opportunities of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Co-operation Zone planned on Hengqin to expedite the city's efforts regarding economic diversification. He called on the local government to work closely with the Guangdong and Zhuhai governments in advancing the planning, policies and projects earmarked for the zone.

We also look at the current COVID-19 situation in Macao in this issue. The strict

measures taken by the local government over the past year have allowed life in the city to slowly return to normal with its population finding alternatives to remain culturally and socially active. With the recent arrival of vaccines and the beginning of inoculations, a huge step has been taken in the health sector. Plus, Macao remains an exemplary place on an international scale in the fight against the pandemic.

Other must-reads in this issue include the icy swimming habits of a club which has been going in Macao for years now. The Macao Winter Swimming Club sees many of its local members going for early morning dips in the chilly waters around the city every day. Another sports-related story sees capoeira expert Eddy Murphy taking his young students through their paces in this Afro-Brazilian martial art that combines elements of acrobatic dance, music and fighting. To cap it all off, we continue our discovery of local talents as we give voice to six young chefs who create gastronomic delights in Macao, including our own Macanese dishes. From Hengqin to Macao's kitchens, this March issue of Macao Magazine should keep you fascinated while the world gets vaccinated and slowly edges back to some sort of normality.

Gonalo C sar de S 
Editor-in-Chief

NEWS

Rays of light

Every single COVID-19 vaccine is a ray of light. Macao's vaccination programme is gathering speed, edging the city closer to the light at the end of the coronavirus tunnel.

Text Gonçalo César de Sá and Christian Ritter Photos Government Information Bureau



Health Bureau director Lei Chin Ion (far right) and other health service representatives inspect the arrival of vaccines in Macao

The COVID-19 pandemic has now been raging across the globe for more than a year. More than 120 million people have caught the coronavirus and, of them, more than 2.6 million people have lost their lives. For the best part of the past year, there has been no light at the end of the tunnel as almost every nation has struggled to beat the virus. However, towards the end of last year, a ray of hope was announced by scientists. A vaccine had been created. Millions of people across the world have now already had at least one dose and the end is in sight.

That ray of hope came to Macao last month. The city's first batch of mainland China-made novel coronavirus jabs arrived after a 30-hour truck drive from Beijing and the vaccines quickly began to be administered at a major local public hospital on

9 February, just days before Chinese New Year. Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng was one of the first people in the SAR to receive an injection alongside health workers in the city who were able to get shots ahead of the spring holidays – potentially a high-risk period for COVID-19 transmissions.

Both Macao's local government and its citizens have shown their mettle during the ongoing fight against the viral menace – not least with the steady provision and ubiquitous wearing of facemasks, as well as with the strict prevention and control measures that have been enacted by the government throughout. Countries around the world can learn from their counterparts in Macao. Due to the strict measures, Macao hasn't experienced any locally transmitted cases for more than a year.

Figures released on 30 March state that, out of those vaccinated so far, 49,308 people had received a jab from Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical group Sinopharm or from German company BioNTech. An additional 93,166 people had been able to confirm an appointment for their first vaccination.

So far the Health Bureau says that a total of 600,425 doses of either Sinopharm or BioNTech vaccines have been delivered to Macao, which will be sufficient for 300,000 residents – just under half of the 683,000 population – to get the required two jabs each. This is a crucial phase in the battle against the virus as these people – many who are old or vulnerable – receive their injections, which are free of charge for both permanent and non-permanent residents, as well as non-resident workers and non-local students. The vaccination campaign has so far been carried out on a voluntary basis, with up to 5,000 people being vaccinated every day. Of the daily total, a quota of 4,000 vaccinations have been reserved for Macao ID holders and the

remaining 1,000 are for non-resident workers. The Health Bureau has also said that so far Macao has ordered some 1.5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, including 400,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and 200,000 doses of vaccines from the COVAX Facility, a global initiative aimed at equitable access to vaccines led by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and others.

Restrictions remain

As the pace gathers speed in Macao’s vaccination programme, the message is still for residents to stay safe and take care. The city continues to enforce some local restrictions and travel controls due to the virus. Authorities require travellers and residents to register their address or most frequented locations to receive a health code. Officials also require COVID-19 testing for those attending social gatherings of more than 400 people. Facemasks remain mandatory in entertainment complexes, government offices and on public transport. Thermal scanners are in place at all entry points into Macao, as well as at the entertainment complexes, government offices and many businesses. These measures have so far been essential in the prevention of any locally transmitted case over the past year as Macao has reported only 48 cases – 46 of them imported, with no fatalities.

Transport between Macao and Hong Kong remains available only via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge because the maritime connections to Hong Kong are still suspended. Several airlines have suspended flights at Macau International Airport and further flight cancellations are possible amid low demand. Authorities continue to ban most foreign nationals from entering the city but exceptions are in place for some foreigners who are essential workers or have spouses and children in Macao.



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng receives his first vaccine dose



- 1 Health workers collect batches of the vaccine after they arrive in the city
- 2 A medical worker receives the COVID-19 vaccine
- 3 The second batch of 400,000 doses of Sinopharm's inactivated COVID-19 vaccine is delivered to Macao
- 4 Health Bureau workers check the temperature data of the truck which carried the second Sinopharm batch in
- 5 A man gets a shot in the arm at a vaccination station in the city



All photos on this page by Xinhua News Agency

Macao's government has also relaxed its entry ban on foreign nationals who don't have a local ID card. The local government's decision about its new entry measure for foreign nationals came after the Office of the Commissioner of the Foreign Ministry in Macao announced that all foreign nationals holding a permanent or non-permanent ID card can now apply again for all categories of visas to mainland China provided that they have been in the city for at least 28 consecutive days before the date of application and have been vaccinated. A statement by the commissioner's office also announced that all other foreigners living in the city who have been vaccinated can also apply again for all categories of visas to the mainland.

Applicants for a visa to visit the mainland must hold a valid certificate of COVID-19 vaccination issued by the Macao Health Bureau. Residents of mainland China can enter Macao if they have not been to any other places in the previous 21 days. Individuals from low-risk areas on the mainland only need to submit a negative nucleic acid COVID-19 test taken within seven days of their

arrival. However, officials require travellers from medium and high-risk areas of mainland China to quarantine for 14 days at designated hotels in the city. Travellers in quarantine for 14 days must carry out self-health management for an additional 14 days, while those in quarantine for 21 days must carry out self-health management for an extra seven days.

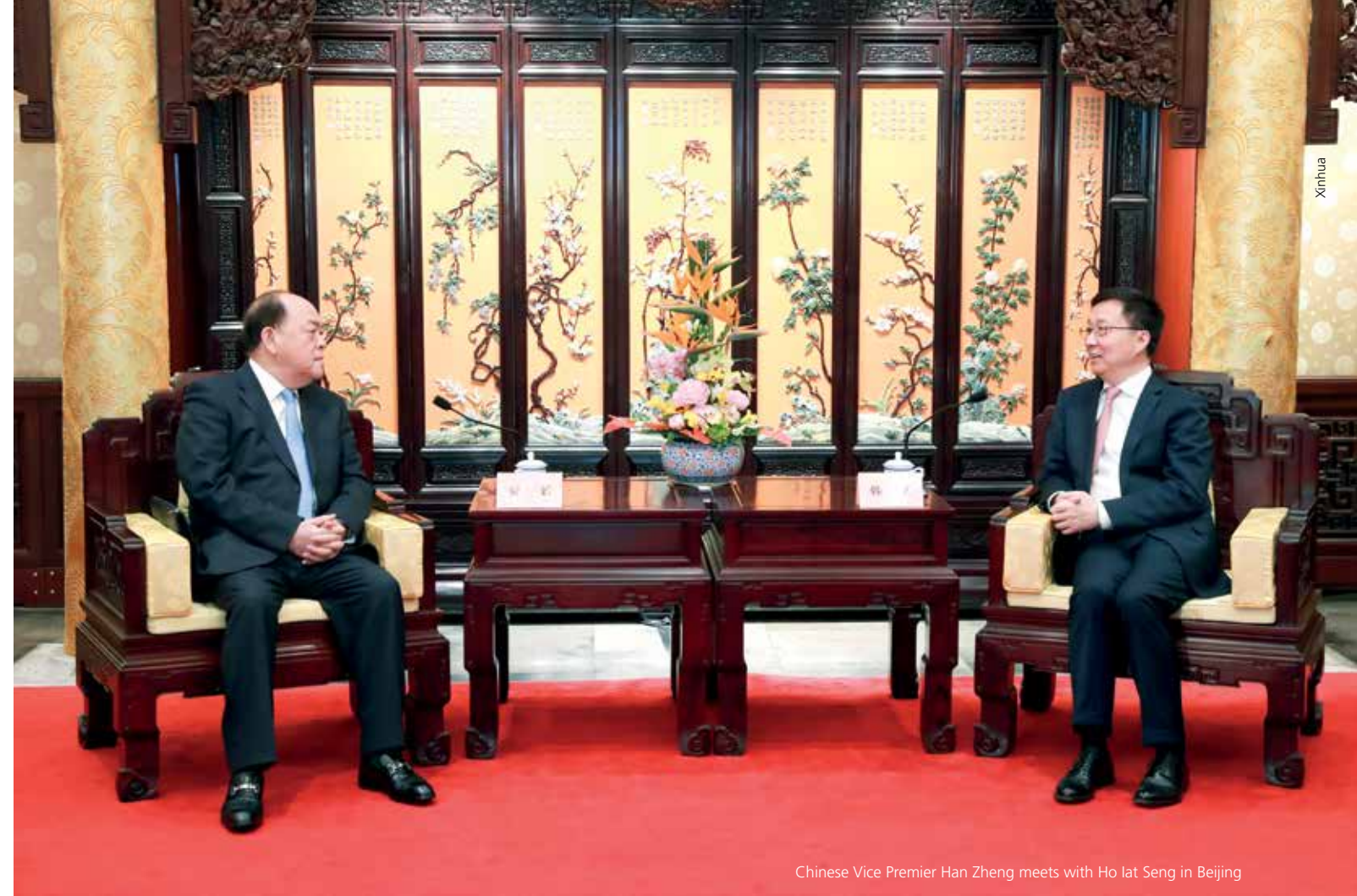
The government has also this month reduced the quarantine period for people arriving in the city from Hong Kong from 21 days to 14 days.

Also this month the government has cancelled the requirement to show a negative nucleic acid test result to enter the 41 entertainment complexes in the city, which had been in place since 15 July. The decision was based on the fact that all the visitors from the mainland who entered Macao held a seven-day negative nucleic acid test certificate when entering the city, taking into account prevention measures such as checking health codes, wearing facemasks, dividers between gamers and social distancing inside the complexes.

Significant improvements

The pandemic in mainland China has significantly improved since mid-February. The announcements to allow foreigners to enter China (under very strict guidelines) by both Beijing and Macao's government came a week after six members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee (CPPCC) in the city urged Beijing to allow Macao-based foreigners back into the mainland. The sextet called on the central government to lift visiting restrictions on foreign nationals holding a Macao ID card and foreign non-resident workers in Macao.

The proposal to lift visiting restrictions was put together by property developer Chong Sio Kin, businesswoman Tina Ho Teng Iat, lawyer and member of the Executive Council Leonel Alberto Alves, professional nurse Ung Pui Kun, newspaper director Wan Nang Hon and architect



Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng meets with Ho Iat Seng in Beijing



Ho Iat Seng meets the new Commissioner for the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Macao, Liu Xianfa

Eddie Wong Yue Kai. The sextet attended the annual session of the CPPCC National Committee that took place in Beijing from 4 March. They pointed out that both the mainland and Macao have made a 'very good' achievement in bringing COVID-19 under control and that, as a result, travel between the mainland and Macao has been gradually relaxed since last year. Also, the issuing of travel permits for all mainland China residents to visit Macao has resumed since September. The sextet's proposal also said that foreign nationals holding a Macao ID card and foreign non-resident workers in Macao 'work and live in Macao, contributing to the development of Macao as well as the Greater Bay Area'.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has since reiterated the continuing need for COVID-19 control efforts and the promotion of social and economic recovery in the city. Speaking during a meeting held at the headquarters of

the Central People's Government Liaison Office in Macao just a few days before we went to print, Ho promised that the government will step up its virus control efforts to ensure that the battle is won and the supply of vaccines is guaranteed for the entire population of the city.

The measures taken by Macao have been praised by Chinese authorities in a show of confidence. On 7 March, China's Vice Premier Han Zheng met with Ho Iat Seng in Beijing and encouraged the Macao government to continue containing COVID-19 on a regular basis. A month earlier, the new commissioner of the Foreign Ministry in Macao, Liu Xianfa, had also praised the local government's 'effective' measures to prevent and control the spread of the virus. With those measures still in place and with the vaccine programme gathering pace in Macao, that light at the end of the tunnel is getting a little brighter every single day. ●



TCM SPECIAL

THE PERFECT MEDICINE

As Macao focuses on the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry in a bid to diversify its economy, we speak to the experts, government and people on the street about ancient holistic therapies. Also discover the global facts, as well as details on a new law that will change TCM in Macao.

The herbal remedy

Macao is seeking to diversify its economy and it's looking at the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry to achieve that goal. We investigate the city's ever-growing relationship with this ancient holistic approach to health.

TCM SPECIAL

Text Erris Ho

Traditional Chinese Medicine remedies inside a pharmacist's old cabinet

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has a long and storied history in China, spanning more than 2,200 years. Its basic concept is that 'qi' – the vital force of life – surges through the body and any imbalance to it can cause illness. Chinese herbs, cupping, massage and acupuncture are all types of TCM therapies – but this balanced, holistic approach to preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases has often stood at odds with Western medicine, with some scientists claiming a lack of evidence for many TCM treatments and remedies. Either way, millions of people in China and beyond swear by the benefits of TCM and, as a result, the industry is big money.

Macao is now also looking at the benefits of TCM. However, the city's interest lies largely in the financial advantages of the industry as it seeks to diversify its economy away from being so reliant on the gaming sector. In November, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng pledged to intensify the city's efforts to revive its economy in the wake of COVID-19 during his Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2021 – and one of his focuses was clearly on further growth in Macao's TCM industry. The SAR government's Five-Year Development Plan, launched in 2016, already highlighted its interest in nurturing the industry as a way 'to promote moderate economic diversification'.

Also in November, the city's Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a government-initiated bill in general terms at a parliament plenary session. The bill – which will become 'The Traditional Chinese Medicine Activities and the Registration System of Proprietary Chinese Medicines' if passed – regulates the licensing of TCM products in Macao, such as their import, export, production, wholesale and retail sale, aiming at better ensuring the quality of TCM products in the local market, as well as increasing the export competitiveness of locally manufactured products and promoting the development of the industry in the city as whole. It has now entered its second phase, meaning it will be reviewed this year before becoming law. And when the Legislative Assembly does that, it should mean that all kinds of TCM products will have to be registered before they can be sold in the local market, showing just how



serious the government is on making this industry a fully regulated success.

There are 130 TCM pharmacies, 10 firms engaged in the import or export of TCM products, and five TCM manufacturers in Macao alongside more than 260 people working in local TCM pharmacies. And then there's the nearby island of Hengqin, a key cog in the government's plans to expand the industry in the future. In 2011, the governments of both Guangdong province and Macao committed to developing the Guangdong-Macau Traditional Chinese Medicine Technology Industrial (GMTCM) Park on Hengqin in a bid to facilitate the internationalisation and standardisation of TCM and to help the economic diversification of Macao. There are already 199 companies registered at the park with 46 of them from Macao as of the end of last year's count. It has also been reported that the Hengqin branch of the Zhuhai People's Hospital earlier this year signed contracts with 53 Macao doctors who are now able to practice directly at the hospital. Many of them are said to specialise in TCM.

Long-term success

Another feather in the cap of Macao's TCM industry is the State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine (SKL-QRCM). Since 2011, this national platform for the development of Chinese medical research has been based at both the University of Macau (UM) and the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST). Dr Zhou Hua, a full professor at the SKL-QRCM and dean of the Faculty of Chinese Medicine at MUST, says he can foresee the long-term success of the TCM industry in Macao as it can 'leverage the existing policy advantages permitted by the central government' while also 'benefitting from the growing international recognition' that TCM has garnered over recent years. Indeed, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has played no small part in this as in 2018 it announced it will, for the first time, include TCM in its globally used diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management and clinical purposes, giving the ancient Chinese medical approach new-found international gravitas.

"Generally speaking," says Dr Zhou, "the developmental trend of Chinese medicine in the international arena is very positive given the central government has been promoting its standardisation and modernisation in and outside of China for the past three decades. For example, Australia and Portugal have already enacted TCM legislation and both the Korean and Japanese TCM industries have developed very well – both of which originated

from ancient China." Dr Zhou adds that there are also many practicing TCM doctors around the world 'who studied TCM in China or even in their own countries'.

The dawn of a new millennium brought TCM into the economic conversation in Macao, claims Dr Zhou. "The development of TCM in Macao started from the founding of TCM education in the city in 2000," he says. "The TCM scientific research centres were founded in 2011. Then we started forming patents and transforming products.

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*I can foresee
the long-term
success of the
TCM industry
in Macao.*

– Dr Zhou Hua

Now, we believe the next stage is to use everything we have created and learned over 21 years and transform all the research results into an entire industry in Macao. I think there will be tremendous changes in the city's TCM industry over the next five to 10 years and that will contribute in no small way to the economic diversification of Macao."

Local and national benefits

In order to establish a rounded and profitable TCM industry in Macao, the city needs to capitalise on the benefits of both local and national TCM policies, according to Dr Zhou. "Currently in China," he says, "TCM has its own legislation that is separate from Western medicine. This is a way to further promote the development of TCM. Unique policies and projects can accelerate the industrialisation of TCM in the Greater Bay Area." The GBA covers Macao and Hong Kong, as well as nine other Chinese cities in the region. Industrial and economic success in one city can add to the success of the GBA as a whole.

Dr Zhou gives a good example. He says that the 'Work Plan for Regulatory Innovation and Development of Pharmaceutical and Medical Device in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area', which was promulgated by the central government at the end of last year, will give Macao and Hong Kong residents the chance to seek 'suitable healthcare services' in the mainland cities of the GBA, should they choose. It will also help further promote the development of TCM across the GBA as it brings healthcare institutions closer together. Dr Zhou points out that, under the plan, power will be given to the government of Guangdong province 'to grant approval' for Hong Kong or Macao-registered drugs and 'medical devices' – and that this application process will be simplified. He says this move will 'highly enhance the convenience for pharmaceutical enterprises to expand their businesses in Macao'.



Dr Zhou Hua

António Sanmarful

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The GMTCM Park provides a platform for TCM doctors in Macao to communicate with the young and famous doctors across the country.

– Dr Lai Ka Meng



In terms of local policy, Dr Zhou says that the TCM industry in Macao will truly be able to ‘take off’ when the ‘Traditional Chinese Medicine Activities and the Registration System of Proprietary Chinese Medicines’ bill is passed. “Since 1999,” he says, “Macao’s three Chief Executives have established a sound foundation for the city’s TCM industry at different stages by educating talents, launching services and scientific research,

researching technology and implementing policies. All that’s lacking now is the Chinese Traditional Patent Medicine Registration Law.” Dr Zhou says that there’s a ‘long registration process’ for any TCM product made in Macao right now. He notes that an individual request must be made to the city’s Health Bureau for every new batch but he says that when the registration law – which has been under review since 23 October – is in force, the process will be smoother and ‘will not only help to standardise the use of registered TCM products in the city but also allow them to go out to market across the GBA’.

Dr Zhou sees the potential of the TCM industry in Macao but he does note that its development will be ‘a gradual and arduous process that requires the collaborative efforts of academia, government and the people’ as well as ‘support elements from mainland China’. “There is a huge gap in the level of industrial manufacturing between Macao and mainland Chinese TCM,” he says. “In Macao, there are only around a dozen small-scale registered pharmaceutical factories. Moreover, to achieve such a well-established TCM industry, it will require massive resources and investment of up to RMB 100 million (MOP 124 million). Therefore, it is necessary to introduce larger capital and domestic companies, such as the China National Pharmaceutical Group – also known as Sinopharm – and other pharmaceutical companies.”

“Another challenge we are facing,” continues Dr Zhou, “is that we need more professionals in the TCM industry. Previously, we have been focusing on the



Acupuncture is a key technique in Traditional Chinese Medicine

training of TCM talents in the scientific research and development sector. Therefore, we need to make adjustments to the current policy on talents. For example, the production stages of TCM products can be done in the pharmaceutical companies in Guangdong, with later key stages done in Macao. This will promote the development of the TCM production industry in Macao and create a much wider pool of talent in the city. Thus, how to attract these talents should be outlined in the policy.”

Strongly competitive

Dr Lai Ka Meng is a registered TCM doctor at Cheng Mio Medical Centre in the heart of Macao. He boasts a decade of work experience in the field and believes that the city’s current TCM talent policies have actually put local

TCM practitioners in a strongly competitive position. He says: “There is an incentive-based policy for local TCM doctors called the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA). This allows statutory and registered TCM doctors in Macao to work on the mainland for at least three years. And we are exempt from the one-year internship requirement that’s standard for the biggest hospitals on the mainland, as well as the mainland’s qualification examination.” Dr Lai adds that local TCM doctors are also offered exchange and work opportunities in Portuguese-speaking countries across the world.

Dr Lai welcomes the Macao government’s drive to create a strong TCM industry in the city. “Macao’s TCM market is relatively standardised,” he says. “Similar to the measures on the mainland,

we also have an examination and training system for TCM practitioners to ensure quality. Also, one of the advantages of Macao is that the government’s Department for Pharmaceutical Affairs (DAF) can regulate the quality and efficacy of the TCM ingredients more effectively due to the city’s small size. This enables a more reliable regulatory regime to ensure the safety and quality of the clinical practice of TCM. This kind of industrialisation may not have a breakthrough effect in the short-term as scientific research takes a long time but I believe the industrialisation of TCM will be beneficial to the economic diversification of Macao in the long run. Maybe, in the future, Macao can become not only a trading base for TCM but also a patented platform for quality monitoring in the city or over at the GMTCM Park in Hengqin.”



Mozambique student learning Chinese cupping during a TCM training course

The GMTCM Park is already a ‘good bridge between the TCM industry and TCM practitioners’ in the GBA and Macao, according to Dr Lai. “It provides a platform for TCM doctors in Macao to communicate with the young and famous doctors across the country,” he says, “or even to communicate with TCM doctors in Portuguese-speaking countries. This all helps in the effective promotion of TCM across the world.” He adds that the GMTCM Park not only assists enterprises in the production of TCM products but also in the areas of quality control and policy research.

He notes that the park was involved in ‘providing opportunities for talent exchanges and merchandise sales’ at a TCM conference in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2018, and it also held a ‘very innovative’ TCM training course in the Portuguese language in 2019. Also, in 2016 and 2017, TCM training courses were organised for young Mozambique students in their home country by both the Mozambique Ministry of Health (MISAU) and the GMTCM Park in partnership.

Dr Zhou admits the development of the GMTCM Park has taken much

time so far and has been ‘difficult’, not least because there was a whole new way of working when enterprises from Macao and the mainland first joined forces. But he says that now the park is into its ‘development period’, with ‘industrial, factory and equipment construction’ at its heart, it’s all coming together. “Next,” he says, “manufacturing production and sales will gradually develop.”

In addition to this, the TCM industry should also provide an abundance of opportunities for businesses to fuel innovation. Already there are resort businesses

appearing on Hengqin with TCM therapies as a highlight, such as the Ruilian (Hengqin) Wellness Resort that caters to visitors and the Serensia Woods retirement and tourism lifestyle project that we detail in our feature on p28.

Setting out the law

As mentioned earlier, new laws are crucial to the success of the TCM industry in Macao. The bill that should lead to a law regulating the licensing of TCM products in Macao was discussed just a few weeks ago

by the government. Topics discussed included the punishments that anyone who counterfeits or illegally supplies TCM products, ingredients and ‘decoction pieces’ would get once the bill becomes law. According to the chairman of the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, Ho Ion Sang, during government sessions last month, counterfeiters could be sentenced to a maximum of five years in prison if they fall foul of the law when it comes into force. Ho said that the law aims to provide a sustainable developmental framework for the

TCM industry and ensure the safety of TCM. The bill will be further optimised and inspected over the coming months.

The Health Bureau arm of the government plays an active role in supporting and facilitating the development of the TCM industry in Macao, including in the establishment of the legal system surrounding the industry, as well as with the promotion of TCM professionals’ training and international exchanges between TCM professionals. A spokesman for the bureau tells us that the



A TCM herbal remedy cooks in an old casserole pot

One of the new buildings with a swimming pool at the soon-to-open Ruilian (Hengqin) Wellness Resort

Image courtesy of the Ruilian (Hengqin) Wellness Resort

Resorting to TCM

A new wellness resort on Hengqin will focus on TCM

Hengqin Island is quickly becoming an important centre for Macao and the Greater Bay Area's TCM industry. And that doesn't just mean for research and development. That also means for leisure too. Take the Ruilian (Hengqin) Wellness Resort, which is due to open its doors later this year. Owned by the GMTCM Park and managed by Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, this is the first TCM wellness resort on the island.

Located by the estuary of the Zhujiang River in Hengqin and overlooking vast wetlands, Ruilian is set to offer holistic wellness and hotel services, featuring 214 wellness rooms and suites and 18 villa units alongside three wellness-orientated food and beverage outlets. There's a heavy TCM presence here as the resort's core service team is made up of a group of renowned TCM experts. There are personalised TCM services available to guests, as well as TCM-related cuisine on the menu.

Ruilian's focus is on 'hotel, healthcare and medicine' with TCM healing experiences at the heart of the programme. Richard Chan, the resort's area general manager, says it's the 'perfect encounter of TCM and Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts', aiming 'to create a personalised wellness destination based on TCM theory and wellness'. "As government entities continue to support wellbeing programmes for the health of citizens," he says, "wellness travel appeals to more and more people, and TCM continues to be one of the main interests among people of all ages. Our target groups are those people who embrace services from science to spirit, seek wellness and enjoy a healthy lifestyle."

bill, which has a Chinese and a Portuguese name that translates to 'Traditional Chinese Medicine Activities and the Registration System of Proprietary Chinese Medicines', has been passed by the city's Legislative Council 'in general terms' and has also 'been deliberated in detail' by the government's First Standing Committee.

"At present," says the spokesman, "all parts of the world require that imported products be registered in the place of origin. The bill proposes a registration system for proprietary Chinese medicines which can fill in the gaps in the existing legislation, which can further ensure the safety, effectiveness and quality of proprietary Traditional Chinese Medicines in the city's market and also improve the competitiveness of our export sector." The spokesman adds that the bill 'also introduces Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)', meaning that 'all new pharmaceutical factories must comply with GMP standards and be in line with international standards in the future'.

"After the introduction of the bill," continues the spokesman, "it will provide a legal basis for the registration and listing of proprietary Traditional Chinese Medicines in Macao and for it to 'go global', which will help enhance the competitiveness of our export sector and attract more mainland manufacturers to produce proprietary Traditional Chinese Medicines in Macao." The spokesman adds that, in the meantime, 'designated medical institutions operating in nine cities

in the Greater Bay Area' are allowed to 'use urgently needed medicines' that are on the market in Macao 'for clinical use after getting approved by the Guangdong Provincial Food and Drug Administration' and that 'such medicines can also be sold in the Greater Bay Area'.

The spokesman says that, in the future, 'Macao will work closely with the mainland's drug regulatory authorities' to develop the Greater Bay Area, 'a market with a population of 70 million'. "This is an important step to establish a Macao brand for the proprietary Traditional Chinese Medicines circulating in Macao," adds the spokesman. "At the same time, this bill establishes

the qualification requirements for technical supervisors in different places, providing room for job and development opportunities for Traditional Chinese Medicine doctors, Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners and Chinese pharmacists. This can create favourable conditions for the young Traditional Chinese Medicine professionals to further develop, which is in line with the government's policy principles."

The 'Medical Staff Professional Qualifications and the Legal System for Practice Registration' – translated from its Chinese and Portuguese name – law is due to come into effect in Macao on 1 October. The

spokesman says this 'will regulate the professional qualifications and practice registration of 15 types of medical professionals, including Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners and Chinese pharmacists'. "To ensure the practice level of TCM practitioners and pharmacists," says the spokesman, "the new regulation also includes a credit system, which can ensure a sustainable professional development of the industry. It is one of the conditions for the practitioners to licence renewal so that the practitioners can acquire the most up-to-date medical knowledge and skills, thus protecting public safety and health."



A traditional Chinese pharmacy selling TCM remedies and ingredients in Macao

aluxum

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Macao will work closely with mainland China’s drug regulatory authorities to develop TCM in the Greater Bay Area.

– Health Bureau spokesman

Doctor WHO

The Health Bureau spokesman says that the WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine (Macao) was established in 2015 and has ‘organised many inter-regional and local training workshops and expert meetings to promote talent training and exchanges in the industry’. By last year, says the spokesman, the centre had provided training to around 2,400 health officials and local professionals from all over the world. In addition, during the pandemic last year, the fourth ‘thematic training on the transmission of clinical experiences by recognised TCM doctors’ sessions were held, ‘providing online training for more than 400 local registered Chinese doctors’, as well as TCM practitioners. Two online training courses have already been held this year by the centre ‘which attracted about 200 participants’. In addition, the spokesman says that ‘the centre will hold inter-regional training workshops in Macao every year’ until 2023 and ‘will continue to invite TCM masters and famous TCM doctors from mainland

China to come to Macao to provide clinical teaching and topical seminars’.

“In order to deepen talent cultivation in the TCM industry,” says the spokesman, “the Health Bureau will actively co-operate with GMTCM Park and continue to carry out more Traditional Chinese Medicine training programmes, as well as actively support the young Chinese medicine practitioners in Macao to gain a deeper understanding of the development of the Greater Bay Area and to be part of the development plan of the Greater Bay Area.” The spokesman adds that the bureau will continue to play a role in the WHO centre and is ‘actively preparing for the first training course’ for TCM practitioners ‘in order to further elevate the level of TCM professionals. And ‘with the aim to create more favourable conditions’ for the development of the Greater Bay Area market, a dedicated TCM service development department ‘will also be established to boost the overall development’ of TCM medicine services.

Macao is certainly well on its way to having a strong, well-regulated TCM industry in the city, on Hengqin and connected to the wider GBA TCM network. The potential is enormous and although it will take a few more years yet to see a comprehensive and relatively large TCM industry in the SAR, all the preparatory work is being done now by the lawmakers, the government, the TCM practitioners and everyone else connected with the industry in the city. The debate over whether TCM is ‘better’ or ‘more effective’ than Western medicine will likely rage on globally but it doesn’t make any difference to Macao. The city is dedicated to the blossoming of an industry which may crucially help it to economically diversify in the future. That, to many people, will be just what the doctor ordered. ●



TCM ingredients and ancient medical papers on a table

THE WORD ON THE STREET

Interviews Erris Ho

Traditional Chinese Medicine can sometimes be a controversial subject and that's no less true in Macao, especially for young people who have tried both Western and TCM products. We hit the city's streets and find out their opinions...



ALTHEA SUN

Age: 23

Profession: TCM student

"The use of Traditional Chinese Medicine is extensive in Macao, especially among the Cantonese population. For example, many people use chrysanthemum, rose, wolfberry or red date tea every day. I hope that the TCM market will become more standardised, though, as TCM recipes can vary tremendously. Good quality TCM products can be expensive, so I hope that the Macao government will regulate the TCM market."



UTIN CHEONG

Age: 27

Profession: Healthcare worker

"I am sceptical about TCM because there is no clear evidence to prove its efficacy. I rarely use TCM as a treatment method. I consider some TCM therapeutic methods, such as the use of needles and cups, a potential risk to our skin and bodies, and some TCMs, such as [large plant genus] aristolochia and [flowering plant genus] aconitum, are harmful."



NATALIE HONG

Age: 22

Profession: Teacher

"I am not too worried about the side effects of using TCM because natural means and materials can be used to treat illnesses. For example, I have used TCM to regulate menstruation and to get rid of acne. But compared to Western medicine, it does take a longer time to see the effects. It is great that the government is promoting the industry as a way to diversify the local economy. Macao is a platform for cultural exchange between the East and West, so I'm sure the government can help TCM go global."



RICHARD LAM

Age: 23

Profession: Accountancy student

"I believe both TCM and Western medicine can achieve therapeutic effects. TCM does this mainly by regulating body functions and other health conditions. It takes a longer time to see the effects but is also less of a burden on our bodies. But in order to develop the TCM industry in Macao, more resources are needed to be put into the industry's supporting mechanisms, such as education, jobs, training programmes and other schemes that encourage brain gain and good practice."



EUNICE POU

Age: 22

Profession: Accounting graduate

"For some conditions, TCM works better than Western medicine. Traditional treatments for dark spots on my skin have worked well. My TCM doctor said the spots were the manifestation of toxins in my body and then he prescribed some remedies to rebalance my body and release those toxins. After a few weeks, the spots significantly faded."



HIM LO

Age: 26

Profession: Network engineer

"People in Macao use TCM extensively, with remedies ranging from herbal tea and soup to illness treatments. Basically, people of different ages are exposed to TCM in Macao so there is already a high degree of acceptance here."



IVY LEI

Age: 25

Profession: Administrative worker

"I started drinking herbal tea to balance my 'yeet hay', which is a Cantonese phrase that means being too hot. This is not a good state of health and is brought on by eating lots of unhealthy foods. The herbal tea sadly made my acne worse but other TCM remedies I've tried have worked. TCM can be less harmful to the body than Western medicine."



SAMUEL BIRKELAND

Age: 23

Profession: Biblical studies student

"TCM is quite mystical but can be effective at times. It would be good for Macao to regulate TCM as this would legitimise the role this medicine has in society and will ensure that the products and services available in the city are of a high quality. It already has a certain level of legitimacy as it is offered at Kiang Wu Hospital but I haven't tried it there myself."



FION LAO

Age: 25

Profession: Journalist

"Generally, I use TCM to adjust my bodily functions. The effects of TCM can be mild and can have relatively few side effects. Remedies usually do not leave any serious impacts on our bodies, so it is worth trying them when recommended by a doctor."



BARRY LAI

Age: 30

Profession: Chef

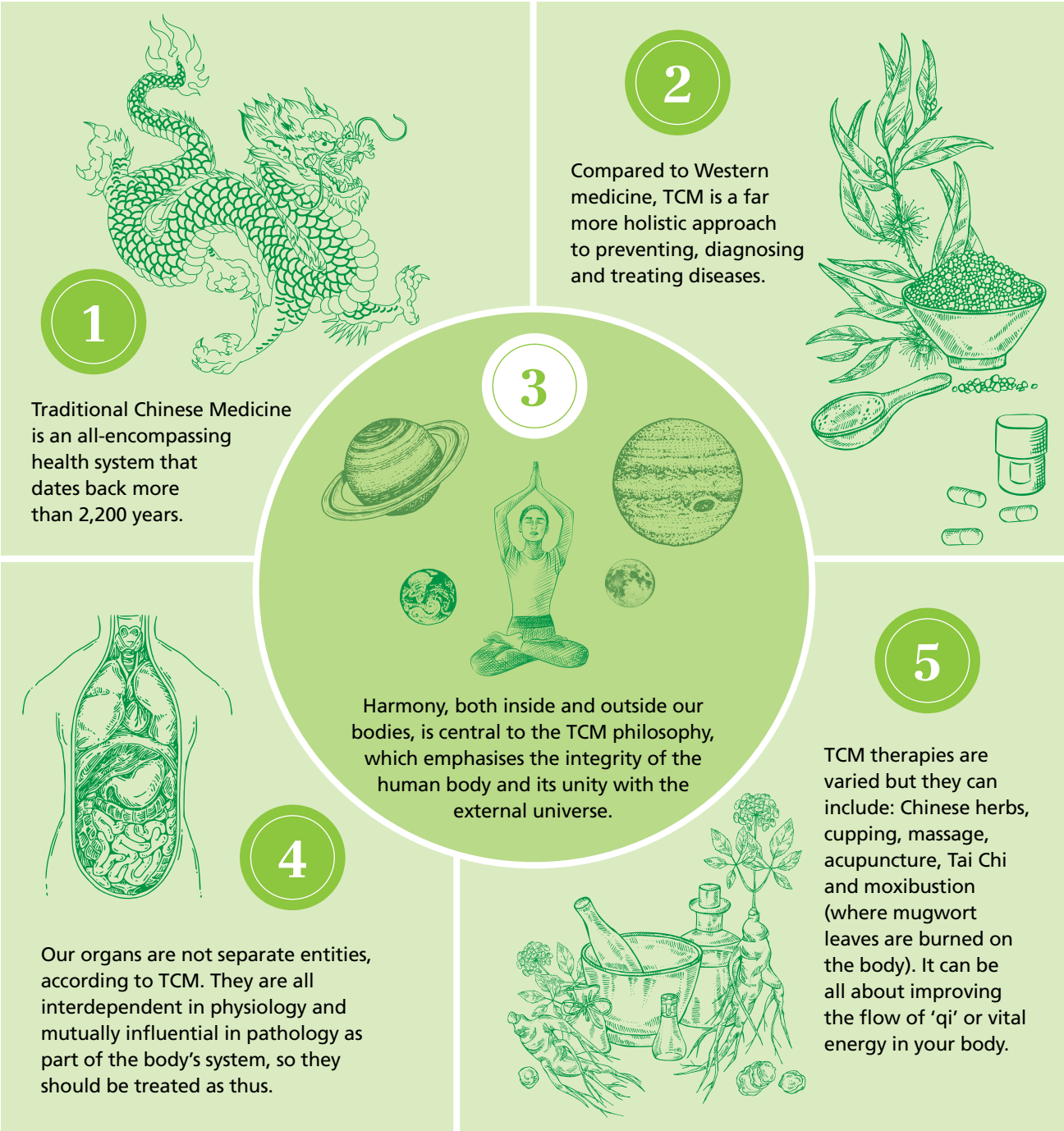
"TCM can be useful for diverse symptoms and for bodily regulation. I often take remedies when I have a cough, cold or burning throat. They taste bad but they can be effective. But in general, TCM takes a long time to exert its effects. I don't think it's as harmful as Western medicine."

The big picture

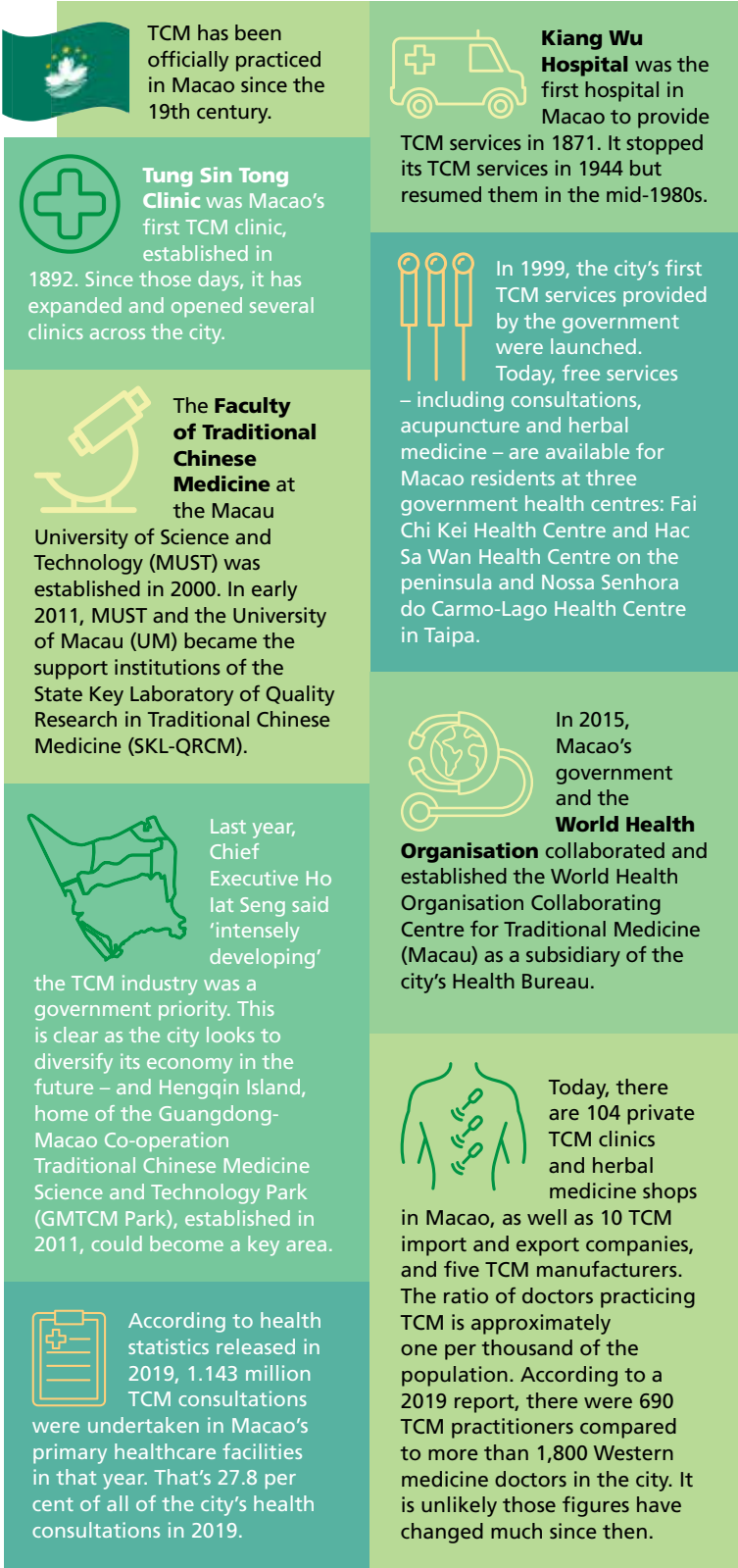
As Traditional Chinese Medicine becomes a focus in Macao and spreads across the globe, we bring you the facts and figures you need to know.

Text Erris Ho

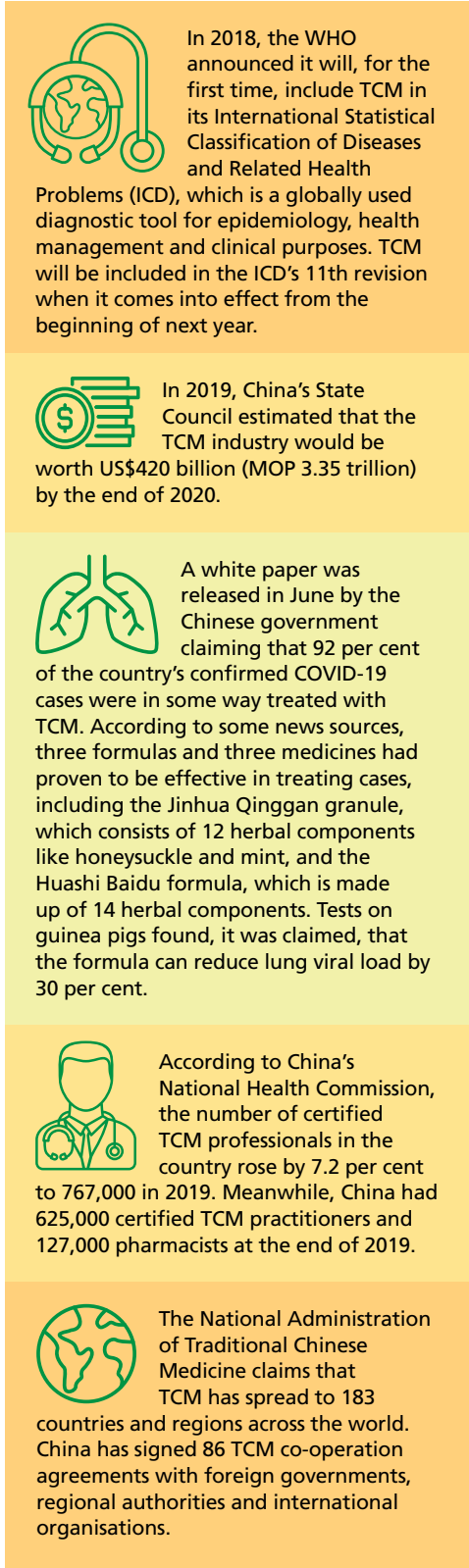
THE BIG FACTS



THE MACAO STORY



CHINA AND THE WORLD



An aerial night-time rendering of the Serensia Woods development. The image shows several modern, multi-story buildings with curved facades and extensive glass windows, many of which are illuminated from within. The buildings are interspersed with lush greenery, including trees and landscaped areas. A prominent feature is a large, circular, illuminated structure in the center, possibly a pool or a public space. The overall scene is set against a dark background, with the city lights and building lights providing the primary illumination. The image is framed by a dark border on the right side, where the text is located.

HEALTH

Building the woods

Serensia Woods is a new high-end wellness-orientated lifestyle destination for both retirees and tourists that will open on Hengqin by the end of this year. We meet the visionary behind a project that could help shape the island's economy over the coming decades.

Text Vivianna Cheong

Artist's impression of how Serensia Woods will look at night when it opens later this year

Over the past decade, Macao's neighbouring island has seen tremendous improvements to its infrastructure. Hengqin – which spans 106 square kilometres, more than three times the size of Macao – has been developing at a rapid pace. It's being urbanised and industrialised in a bid to bring in new economic successes for both mainland China and Macao – a city that needs this relatively newfound space for all sorts of developments. The island is particularly focused on the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry – see our main feature on TCM on p10 for more – but new health-related developments are also now directly catering for the wellness of the island's new residents.

Hengqin is a special economic district of the adjacent city of Zhuhai with a population of about 3,000 people. It's also the largest of Zhuhai's 146 islands. Parts of Hengqin were leased to Macao by the State Council of the People's Republic of China from 2009 and, in those parts, Macao law applies. Since then, it's been a key cog in the SAR's future economic diversification plans as new industry, new transportation links and new housing developments can take place over on Hengqin and, as a result, Macao can start to become less reliant on its gaming industry. Since 2009, this grand project has already attracted private investment from international and local companies as Hengqin, for many, is a political and social dream.

Among the big-name investors over the past decade is local enterprise HN Group. This firm, which was founded in 1920 to import Portuguese products to Macao but

now covers retail, distribution, services, healthcare, construction and engineering, is no stranger to locals. It operates private integrated provider of healthcare products and services Grupo Popular in Macao, which in turn operates the well-known collection of Farmácia Popular pharmacies across town,

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From a political and social perspective – and due to the fact that we are a 100-year-old local enterprise – we decided we should take the lead and invest in Hengqin.

– Amber Li

the original of which dates back more than 120 years. In short, HN Group has a history of expertise in healthcare so it's no surprise that it began eyeing up potential health business opportunities on Hengqin a few years ago. And the culmination of that interest in Macao's neighbouring island? A project that is poised to bring something new, different and long-standing to Hengqin: Serensia Woods.

Lifestyle destination

Billed as a lifestyle destination in Hengqin for wellness, leisure and retirement, the RMB 2.5 billion (MOP 3.08 billion) Serensia Woods project is set to boast a hotel, villas, large spa centre, spa huts, swimming pool, gym, restaurants and a host of wellness centres that provide both Chinese and Western medical treatments as well as holistic treatments and physiotherapy. This major development will, by the end of this year, be an all-encompassing wellness destination not only for retired people to settle down in but for local visitors and tourists alike. It's this fact that makes Serensia Woods a unique addition to the Hengqin economy and environs.

Building works started at Serensia Woods back in 2015 and the whole development is now close to completion. The high-rises are all in place and the grounds are being prepared for its soft opening, which is slated for the last quarter of this year. Occupying 40,000 square metres of land, the development is home to more than 300 living units that are for members – generally expected to be 'people who want to enjoy high-end retirement life, health services, relaxed vacations and look for business receptions'. Each of these units is between 65 and 370 square metres in size and the one-off membership fees themselves are being priced at between HK\$7 million (MOP 7.2 million) and HK\$40 million (MOP 41.2 million). And the reason that the prices are cited in Hong Kong dollars is because the Hong Kong market is one of the prime targets for HN Group as it reaches out to potential members.



Amber Li

As before, Serensia Woods is not just about the retirees who can become members for some wellness-orientated high-end living. It's also targeting short-stay tourists, as well as people looking for a period of therapy and relaxation over a number of weeks. It plans to

organise cultural and art classes for its visitors and members, as well as trips to opera shows and arts exhibitions. All in all, this project, when it opens, is set to be a big draw to Hengqin and could pave the way for similar developments on the island in the future.

HN Group president Amber Li is nothing short of excited about Serensia Woods, a project that may be seen as one of the jewels in the Macao company's crown over the coming years. She tells us that the development's concept has been shaped over the past three decades

One of the buildings at Serensia Woods as it looks now; (below) Amber Li with colleagues at the site in 2018; (opposite page) new member Tam Hok Yip

because providing a beautiful retirement destination has been a passion of hers for that long. She admits she originally wanted to create simply a high-end retirement community but the ideas of ‘wellness centre’, ‘lifestyle destination’ and a ‘place for tourists too’ have been added along the way. But it all nevertheless comes down to her original idea back in 1994, when she was in her 20s and had just returned to live in Macao after years in the US. “I was surprised that retirement services in Macao were so far behind the US,” she recalls. “During the 1980s and 1990s, there were many high-end retirement communities in the US. These were not old people’s homes but communities that provided various life services.”

“In Macao at that time,” continues Li, “people expected their children to look after them and live with them when they retired. Those who did not have children had to go to old people’s homes. That was the only choice for them.” Li notes that, in her opinion, moving to an old people’s home can be a ‘disastrous experience’ for some elderly residents. So, back in 1994, Li first had the idea to build a high-end retirement community in Macao to give families an alternative. She consulted the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau but her idea was rejected, she claims, because of the lack of land to develop in Macao and the fact that Chinese people ‘expect to be looked after by their children’. “I had just come back from a Western country,” she says, “and my idea was deemed not down-to-earth enough.”

Li put her idea on the back burner after that. Until 2007, that is. In that year, she moved with her family to Beijing, where she saw an abundant supply of land and a change of economic atmosphere and family structure. “Around 50 years ago,” she says, “China was very far behind Hong Kong and Macao in terms of economy. But when I moved there, the rapid growth in people’s mindsets absolutely left Hong Kong and Macao behind. Examples of this include online shopping and electronic payment methods. They had become open to change.” Li learned from the new Beijing and her retirement community idea began to resurface.

‘Haigui’ is a Mandarin term that literally means sea turtles but the phrase is often also applied to Chinese people who return to their homeland after studying or being trained abroad for several years. Li notes that many ‘haigui’ were returning home during her time in Beijing. She says they had been ‘influenced by Western education’ and ‘did not follow in the tradition that the retired should expect their children to financially support them’. “These were independent intellectuals with a stable income,” she says. “They were well-organised with their retirement plans. In addition, after the economic reform, many people in mainland China looked for work in cities like Zhuhai and Shenzhen. Big cities like Beijing and Shanghai have many people from various provinces and districts. So I found that a family’s different generations do not live in the same house like the old days. Older people

can’t rely on the younger generations any more.”

In Beijing, Li also observed – due to the city’s rapid economic growth – that people tended to socialise more and consequently had more health problems. Already, up in Beijing, the seeds of the wellness aspect of Serensia Woods were being sown in Li’s mind as both a benefit to a retirement community and as a unique selling point. She started eyeing up Huairou District in northern Beijing and Chongming Island in Shanghai as two possible sites for high-end, wellness-centred retirement communities. “These two locations would cover the north of China,” she says. In 2007, Li believed the mainland was ready for her idea.

Moving to Hengqin

In August 2009, the State Council of the People’s Republic of China officially approved the Overall Development Plan of Hengqin. This immediately positioned the island as a demonstration area for a new model of co-operation between Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and Macao under the principle of ‘one country, two systems’. The plan laid the foundations for all of the development that can now be seen taking place on Hengqin. For Li,

who by now was also based in Macao and Hong Kong, it was more than just an outline plan – it was an incredible opportunity.

“When the Overall Development Plan of Hengqin came out in 2009,” says Li, “we immediately considered placing the retirement community there instead of in north China. It just felt like we should do it.” The retirement community business had begun but had not yet been launched on the mainland so the decision was made to focus on Hengqin instead. Li says that the Overall Development Plan of Hengqin set a ‘high bar for local companies’, adding that because ‘gaming, public services and banking were not suitable developments’ on the island, there were ‘few enterprises that would suit such development there’. She says she always believed that her retirement community would suit Hengqin well.



Image courtesy of Tam Hok Yip



Patrick Lei Weng Kit



Image courtesy of HN Group

“From a political and social perspective,” says Li, “and due to the fact that we are a 100-year-old local enterprise, we decided we should take the lead and invest in Hengqin.” Li notes that it is ‘not an easy task’ to achieve diversified economic growth in Macao. “People have talked about diversified economic development for a long time now,” she says. “But Macao is tiny. We as a local enterprise can feel the limits in terms of development. But Hengqin is a great opportunity which is near our bases in Macao and Hong Kong.” Li says that the north China operations were underway so they ‘met many challenges’ moving the project from the north to the south – but, after much hard work, it’s all come good in the end.

Li believes that with the addition of tourism to the Serensia Woods retirement community, the project has ‘gained currency’. “Tourism is a major industry in Macao,” she says, “and we should take advantage

of it and compete. So this project has become a lifestyle tourist destination, with wellness as our core.” She says the project targets tourists from mainland China and Hong Kong, as well as people from Macao ‘who are looking for high-end living with wellness as the core’. Wellness, to Li, is more than just spa and massage. The destination will also provide members with cultural classes, including flower arrangement, calligraphy and dancing. There will also be talks by professionals in various fields and trips to opera shows and exhibitions. Li notes that ‘mental happiness is the key to good health’ – and that goes for tourists too. “We’re offering many options to tourists,” she says. “They may usually go to theme parks in Hong Kong or to entertainment complexes in Macao or shopping in both cities. Now, we will present wellness as a unique option – and we believe there is a big demand for this across the Greater Bay Area.”

“Post-surgery recovery service is also our forte,” continues Li. “For example, if someone has undergone a hip surgery, it is surely frustrating to go through all the mundane procedures like driving to the hospital all the time and registering for a consultation. But at Serensia Woods, those who’ve had surgery simply stay here. Our therapists provide physical therapies and recovering support in the members’ own rooms.” She adds that ‘rehab and prevention are also key’, saying that medical professionals at the property advise members ‘who want to stay fit to reduce the possibility of illness’ on subjects like diet, lifestyle and supplements. Li also notes that Serensia’s services target high-end crowds but they certainly have rules for their members. “We’ve set a high threshold for our membership,” she says. “I don’t mean members’ social status here. I mean whether they can follow our rules, just like at the Hong Kong Jockey Club. For example,



Artist's impression of one of the many luxurious treatment rooms at Serensia Woods

Image courtesy of HN Group



Professor José C. Alves



Serensia Woods identified an opportunity early and is now strategically positioned as one of the pioneering wellness projects in Macao and Hengqin.

– Professor José C. Alves

we have specific designs of our apartments and they can’t change it.”

Serensia Woods is now almost ready to open its doors in the final quarter of this year. And the project has already attracted members who are keen to move in when the community is officially launched. Among these early birds who have signed up over the past couple of years is Tam Hok Yip, a 63-year-old who runs a construction company with offices in Macao and Hengqin. Tam is a fan of the wellness lifestyle idea and says he sees the ‘investment value in Hengqin’, so he has bought a membership priced at around

HK\$8 million (MOP 8.2 million). He tells us he plans to move into Serensia with his wife. “I think there is a lot of economic potential in Hengqin,” he says. “To me, this membership is also an investment. And it is transferable. I can give it to my son or sell it to others.”

Since Tam bought the membership in 2019, he has frequently driven around the site and checked its construction progress. “I like the idea of wellness,” he says. “At my age, I really need to stay fit. I swim, jog and exercise every day. I want to keep this lifestyle. Rather than going to the doctors when you

feel ill, always pay good attention to your health. Serensia Woods is good for health. It faces the sea and the whole area is green. Hengqin is not a dense city like Macao.” Tam still looks forward to a busy life when he moves into Serensia, though. “I won’t retire,” he says. “I will be still running my business in Macao and Hengqin. My children are all grown up now so this living membership is a great option for me.” Tam has also recommended the membership to two of his friends – one in Macao and the other in Hong Kong. They have both signed up. “At my age,” he concludes, “it feels great to meet friends regularly.”

Employment opportunities

In February, Niu Jing, a member of the Zhuhai Government Party Committee and the party secretary of the Hengqin New District Party Committee, said that it is estimated that Hengqin will achieve a GDP of RMB 1.5 trillion (MOP 1.85 trillion) to 1.8 trillion (MOP 2.2 trillion) by 2025. He also said that the island’s population will rise to more than 200,000 people – and that the amount of people from Macao who will be living and working on Hengqin is expected to be between 30,000 and 50,000. As a result of Niu’s estimations, it can be assumed that job opportunities on the island could be far and wide.

Li notes that Serensia Woods will certainly create more than 500 jobs. “For professional jobs,” she says, “like physical therapists, I’ve hired many overseas professionals to train my therapists, who are from

mainland China and not from Macao. This method is easier to operate from an enterprise’s perspective. If my employees could work in both Hengqin and Macao, that’d certainly give Macao people more employment opportunities.” Li says that the project ‘has brought many challenges’ but that the firm has continued ‘out of our sentiment to Macao’ “The whole of Macao’s society needs to join in,” she says. “As a 100-year-old large enterprise, we are taking the lead and we hope to set an example for young entrepreneurs, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises who set up their business on Hengqin. We want to show that if you work hard, you can make it.”

Professor José C Alves, the dean of the City University of Macau’s Faculty of Business, has praised the Serensia Woods project for bringing new benefits to the wellness industry in the region. “In modern urban

societies,” he says, “new types of wellness and wellbeing services are emerging and being associated with living spaces, whether these are for temporary or permanent periods. Demand for these services is likely to increase with the expected ageing society in China, namely in more affluent areas. Serensia Woods identified this opportunity early and is strategically positioned as one of the pioneering wellness projects in Macao and Hengqin. Serensia Woods announced that it is also targeting affluent customers from Hong Kong, therefore understanding the cross-border dynamics of the Greater Bay Area. It is an interesting business model that I’m looking forward to seeing developing.”

With the business community looking at the project with interest, as well as more than 30 years of work by Li and her team to get to this point, Serensia Woods looks set to not just succeed but to pioneer when it opens later this year. It is bringing new concepts of wellness and retirement living to Hengqin, Macao and the Greater Bay Area, and now that tourism is also a key feature, it perfectly fits the bill of what is trying to be achieved over on Hengqin, a key cog in the diversification of Macao’s economy. When the development opens its doors later this year and starts looking after the wellbeing of its first members, it will be the end of the ‘Serensia Woods construction’ story. But it’ll be the beginning of a new chapter in the ‘Macao-Hengqin road to the future’ story – a story that’s expected to be as fascinating and action-packed as it is successful over the coming years. ●



Patrick Lei Weng Kit



Artist's impression of the finished Serensia Woods from inside the site; (opposite page) how the site looks from within right now

Image courtesy of HN Group

The hard facts

Get to know Serensia Woods

Location	150 metres east of Qinhai North Road, Hengqin
Size	40,000 square metres
Owners and developers	HN Group
Cost of development	MOP 3.08 billion
Project began	2015
Opening date	Some time in the final quarter of this year
Accommodation units	303
Facilities	Hotel, villas, spa facilities, swimming pool, gym, restaurants and wellness centres
Treatments available	Chinese and Western medical treatments as well as physiotherapy
Personalised treatment programmes	Dermatology, Traditional Chinese Medicine, holistic health programmes and more
Cost of membership	Between MOP 7.2 million and 41.2 million each

For more: See serensiawoods.com

FOOD AND DRINK

Fresh ingredients

Meet six of the best up-and-coming chefs and gastronomy experts in Macao. Each of these maestros is under 31 years old and each is blessed with extraordinary culinary talents.

Text Erris Ho Photos António Sanmarful

(From left) Winnie Im, Kathine Kuok, Pedro Almeida, Nicole Yiu, Otilia Novo and Jeronimo Reinaldo Calangi

Few places on Earth do food better than Macao. From the luxury Michelin-starred restaurants in the entertainment complexes to the small eateries that are hidden away in the city's alleyways and shopping centres, there's a wealth of incredible dishes to sample and enjoy. Behind each masterful creation, there's a chef with an immense talent. In short, despite its small size, Macao is home to some of the best culinary maestros in the world.

In 2017, Macao was designated by UNESCO as a Creative City of Gastronomy. It was a fitting award for a city that has excelled at cuisine for centuries. What this honour brought was a spotlight on the SAR's culinary scene – not least, its own homegrown Macanese offerings – for tourism purposes as well as a spotlight on the city's talented chefs, whether they hail from Macao or from countries across the globe. And ever since, this elevation of the gastronomic scene has encouraged young locals to follow their dreams and train to become top chefs. Some will stay and some will leave for faraway lands – but each of these up-and-coming creatives is part of an ever-growing pool of talent for the future of Macao's food industry.

In every issue of this magazine, we shine a spotlight on six young talents. This month, we meet six of the most gifted young chefs – all under 31 years old and all either born and raised in Macao or at least have lived in the city for a good while – who have honed their exceptional crafts at some of the best restaurants and institutions in Macao. And each one has seized the chance to make their mark on the gastronomic scene by learning from the masters and using their skills, passion and imagination to create inspiring and flavoursome dishes. Meet the next generation of top chefs in Macao...



The French connection

There's a long-standing tradition of French food in Macao. For many years, there have been restaurants and stalls offering classic Gallic pastries and cakes across town. Carrying on this tradition is Winnie Im, a 21-year-old culinary art student who specialises in creating decadent French desserts. Im, who also knocks up a range of delightful chocolate creations, studies at the Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST). She is passionate about the art of baking and looks forward to setting out on a culinary career that could one day shape the pastry scene in the city or beyond.

Im may not yet work full-time in one of Macao's restaurants but what sets her apart from other culinary students in the city is that she's already a local baking champion. Last year, she won the Macao stage of the 11th Guangzhou/Hong Kong/Macao/Chengdu Youth Skills Competition for pâtisserie and confectionery after an intense five-hour cook-off against five other talented young Macao pastry and confectionery chefs. She stole the judges'

hearts with her refreshing and unique milk chocolate Earl Grey with yuzu cake, one of her favourite recipes created by both herself and her mentors. She was the only MUST representative in the contest and she is now waiting to be one of three Macao representatives at the regional final up in Chengdu in Sichuan province this summer after a period of postponement.

The Macao leg of that competition gave Im a 'great hands-on opportunity', she says, to help her rapidly advance her skills as a pastry chef. "I was able to learn various skills during the contest," she says, "such as time management and teamwork. The competition was quite intense but I was extremely moved when I saw the final product and how my hard work was appreciated. I am very grateful for the support from my mentors, friends and family who've supported me unconditionally." She describes the process of making pastries as 'fighting a big boss in a video game' – extremely challenging but extremely satisfying come the end result. "I still remember my first time making sponge cake with my friends," she says. "We messed up the proportion of the ingredients and made

biscuits instead. But we finally succeeded after several attempts and with a lot of practice."

Despite her love for the art, Im admits that being a pastry chef can be challenging at times. She once did an internship at luxury hotel, the Mandarin Oriental, Macau, and says it was a tough initiation into the industry. "During my internship," she says, "I worked overtime regularly and, throughout those shifts, I had to stand. There was no sitting down to rest. I cleaned the kitchens and did a lot of other routines during every shift. It was really tiring." Despite the fatigue, she enjoyed her internship and considers it 'a rewarding experience'. "Little things like writing messages for cake toppers such as 'Will you marry me' or 'Happy Birthday' made me really happy," she explains. "I enjoyed working as a team with the master chefs and carrying out many different tasks every day."

Im may be young but she is highly motivated. She hopes that she can one day use her skills to educate more people in Macao about cooking and baking. "After I graduate," she says, "I want to refine my professional skills by working in hotels. I want to gain more inspiration and creativity from these experiences. And I also want to broaden my horizons by visiting other regions and countries. I hope that, one day, I can own my own French pâtisserie and teach others how to excel in this culinary art."



“

I often learn new skills from chefs who come from countries across the world. I'm looking forward to learning much more in my career as a pastry chef in Macao.

– Kathine Kuok

Kathine Kuok



Land of the rising bun

Kathine Kuok is another talented pastry enthusiast in Macao, however the 29-year-old's interests lie in Japanese-style creations. Kuok, a pastry chef at the MGM Macau, had her first brushes with the art thanks to her father, who is a traditional Chinese pastry chef at a local bakery. She would watch him work and learn from him as a young teenager – but she admits it hardly ignited any passions at the time. “My dad tried to teach me how to make traditional Chinese pastries because he thinks it's important to acquire a specialty in order to make a living,” she says, “but I was being rebellious and did not end up doing that back then.” Instead, she says she ‘fell in love with pastry’ when she took up a part-time job at a local café at the age of 16 and began knocking up her own creations. “I felt very satisfied when I received positive feedback from the customers,” she says, “and it's only now I realise that my father has influenced me throughout my journey.”

In 2009, Kuok undertook a hotel management degree course at MUST. It was here that she honed her skills – particularly when she studied for a special pastry and bakery diploma while on the degree course. She also worked part-time at the MGM Macau Pastry Bar during the same period. “I could only study a diploma in pastry and bakery at

that time,” she says, “because a degree was not provided then.”

After she graduated from MUST, Kuok worked even harder to master the art of the pastry by immersing herself in the beauty of Japanese baked goods. “I spent two years in Japan,” she says. “I tried different styles of Japanese cakes. I found their style is very distinct and unique. For example, I really love Japanese strawberry shortcake, which is a sponge cake covered with cream and has strawberries on top. It is a classic dessert that is so light and fluffy. It looks so simple, but it requires good fundamental skills.” After returning to Macao, she worked at the Galaxy Hotel for two years and joined the pastry team at the MGM Macau in 2017.

Kuok, who was shortlisted for the Macao leg of the Anchor Food Professionals pastry chef challenge in 2018, says her dream is to own a Japanese-style café in Macao that is ‘cosy, warm and welcoming’ – a space where she can always engage in conversations with her customers. But she admits that this will be a massive challenge to achieve if she is unable to get enough funding. “There is an increasing number of bakeries in Macao and the quality of each varies a lot,” she says. “But the rent in Macao is expensive, so I am planning to continue to work at local hotels as this will provide me with a lot of learning opportunities to work with other professionals from all across the world. I'm looking forward to elevating my career as a pastry chef in Macao.”



On top of the world

Robuchon au Dôme, which sits atop the Grand Lisboa Hotel, has three Michelin stars and is quite simply one of the most opulent restaurants in Macao. And in the heart of the excitement in the kitchens at this luxury eatery is Nicole Yiu, a 26-year-old chef who has so far excelled in her culinary career. Compared to other professionals in the gastronomic field, this passionate chef has been on a fairly unusual journey to get to where she is now. She admits she ‘grew up as a foodie’ in Macao and became ‘enthusiastic about cooking’ when she was studying for a degree in sociology four years ago at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). “During my years studying,” she notes, “I developed my cooking skills when I learned how to cook for myself. I am a huge foodie and no-one was there to take care of me. I found that I really enjoyed the process of cooking.”

The pivotal moment for Yiu was when she was working her first job at a food media company in LA after she’d graduated. She found she was able to ‘learn a lot about the food industry and food service professionals’ and started to develop a passion for the art of gastronomy – the first rung on the ladder towards becoming a chef. “I found that the lifelong passion of so many chefs really fascinated me,” she says, “and it planted a seed in my mind. So I decided to go for it and I applied for a Le Cordon Bleu culinary and management programme in London.” Le Cordon Bleu London is a leading culinary arts, wine and management school which has been in the UK since 1931. Yiu was accepted. “At first, I was worried that I could not handle it,” she admits, “because cooking can be a totally different experience when it becomes your

job. But I went for it and luckily I’ve survived until now.”

After graduating from Le Cordon Bleu, Yiu did some gruelling work experience for a year at Michelin-recommended Italian restaurant Luca in London. She single-handedly took charge of the eatery’s appetisers section immediately after a brief introduction on her first day. “I basically did not know how to behave properly in the kitchen in that first month,” she recalls, adding that her duties included anything from cleaning to purchasing and the handling of goods – and that she was under an immense amount of pressure. “I had a hard time falling asleep at the beginning,” she says, “but in hindsight, I am grateful for that work experience because it sharpened me in so many ways. I started from zero and I was heartened by recognition from the chefs.” Based on her experience during that year, Yiu admits that what viewers can see in celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s ‘24 Hours to Hell & Back’ television show – where there’s always chaos in the kitchens – is ‘no exaggeration’.

Yiu returned to Macao and joined the team at Robuchon au Dôme in 2019 and her role now is as a chef garde manger – the French term for a cold food chef. She says she enjoys incorporating her pastry skills into the making of pâtés, savoury sorbets and mousses. She also thanks her parents for their support, saying they have been her ‘strongest backbone’ throughout her culinary journey. She thinks that there are many open doors in Macao’s gastronomy field for local chefs – if they work hard. “Compared to the UK,” she says, “there are more resources in Macao and employees can also benefit from the excellent labour laws. In the UK, I only had a 15-minute lunch break every day and had to work much longer hours. I am grateful to be able to work at Robuchon au Dôme and to be surrounded by so many highly skilled chefs.”



Nicole Yiu



Pedro Almeida



A taste of Portugal

It's hard not to think about Portuguese cuisine when it comes to Macao's gastronomic culture as it's had such a heavy influence on the city's food scene for more than 450 years. As a result of this influence, there are many talented chefs in the SAR who specialise in both creating traditional dishes from the European country and in Macanese cooking, which grew out of the diets of the city's early Portuguese residents. One executive chef who is an expert at Portuguese cuisine is Pedro Almeida, who shares his time between the kitchens of three Portuguese-style restaurants in Macao – Albergue 1601, 3 Sardines and Portucau – and a small bakery he co-founded called Pastéis de Chaves. These four businesses are all just a stone's throw away from the Ruins of St Paul's.

Almeida, who is also setting up a new craft beer shop in Macao called Lazaro Brew, has an advantage on some of the competition – he was born and raised in Portugal. The 28-year-old, who is also an F&B import and export merchant, grew up in the city of Chaves in the north of Portugal, spending his youth in the kitchens of his family's food business from a young age. When he was 15 years old, he attended a professional culinary school in Chaves while doing a side job helping his brother in a restaurant's kitchen. His brother, who is five years older than him, was already a chef. "I

went to culinary school to study the theoretical side of cooking and gain culinary knowledge," he says. "That complemented the professional experience I gained in my side job."

By the age of 22, Almeida had amassed nearly a decade of culinary experience in Portuguese kitchens. And then came his big break. He's managed a Facebook page called 'Chefes de cozinha' – where others in the food industry in Portugal regularly post job vacancies – for years. A Portuguese man in Macao posted a recruitment advert for an executive chef at a Portuguese restaurant in the city, Toca, and Almeida replied. He was accepted and within a week, he quit his job at the Vidago Palace Hotel – not far from Chaves – and embarked on a life-changing adventure. "I didn't know how to speak English or Chinese when I came to Macao," he says. "So, I had to catch up with these languages in a few months. I went to the local market every day and the people there taught me to speak Cantonese. Now, I am comfortable talking with my suppliers in Cantonese."

Having lived in Macao for nearly five years now, Almeida says it's been an 'amazing experience' that has exceeded his expectations. "Being a chef is important in Portugal," he admits, "but it's not as important as it seems to be in Macao. People here really like to know their chef. Everyone is a foodie in Macao. I'm a social person, so interacting with my customers is my favourite part of the job. I love to make sure people have an enjoyable overall experience." He adds that Macao is a great place

for him to improve his skills and be creative. "Macao is a very interesting place," he says, "because it has such a diverse culture including people from mainland China, Portugal, the Philippines, India, Japan and Vietnam. As a chef, you can always incorporate different styles into your recipes and improve your knowledge. It's interesting to me that such exchanges between people from all over the world are so natural in Macao. This just doesn't happen often in many other places."

Nevertheless, Almeida explains that the challenge at the three restaurants he cooks at is to 'distinguish your food from other Portuguese restaurants in Macao'. "This is why we always try to create something new that goes beyond the food," he says. "For example, right now we are creating a beer brand. That's something new for a Portuguese restaurant in the city." He adds that communication with the staff members at the three restaurants is 'extremely necessary' given that many of them hail from different cultural backgrounds. "For some street restaurants, for instance," he says, "hygiene may not be prioritised and some staff members may not be knowledgeable about hygiene standards. But at the restaurants I work at, I am always clear about the importance of hygiene, whatever background the staff come from." Aspirational and diligent, Almeida concludes that Macao is a great space for all culinary professionals. "I love what I'm doing right now," he says. "Although the workload can be overwhelming at times, I enjoy it!"



Macanese maestro

It would take a fairly long time to count up all the culinary cultures that have influenced and shaped Macanese cuisine over the years. But it's generally agreed that its main influences hail from Portuguese, Chinese, Indian, African, Malaysian, South American and continental European cooking. One young chef in Macao who takes each of these influences seriously and dedicates himself to preserving the authenticity of Macanese cuisine is Jeronimo Reinaldo Calangi. The 31-year-old executive chef at Soda Port – a new Macanese restaurant at the entertainment complex Macau Fisherman's Wharf – lives, loves and breathes the city's homegrown cuisine.

Calangi has a deep commitment to bringing authentic flavours to diners. He was born and raised in Macao but went to France when he was 15 years old and earned a degree in hotel management at the well-respected Lycée Hôtelier du Touquet Paris-Plage on the country's north coast. While attending the school, he undertook an internship at a restaurant, during which he gained an extreme interest in cooking and thus decided to become a professional chef. He says: "I was mesmerised by the work environment in the kitchen. I did not follow the path that had been suggested by my parents. Instead, I followed my heart and

became a chef because I felt happy, satisfied and passionate when I was in the kitchen."

Calangi admits that being a chef is a high-pressure and exhausting job, but he says that the pressure is outweighed by the sense of fulfillment he gets when he cooks. In fact, he doesn't even call it cooking. He calls it 'creating a sharing moment' that connects the chefs and their guests. "You become completely engrossed in what you're doing because you're making food that makes people happy," he explains. "I see food as not just a link between people but also a valuable sharing moment that's created by a group of chefs who come from different cultural backgrounds. That's really enthralling to me."

Specialising in Mediterranean as well as Macanese food, Calangi has been expanding his culinary skills throughout his career. His already vast experience comes from placements at a host of top dining destinations, including a three-year stint at the Mandarin Oriental, Macao and another year at the Mandarin Oriental, Paris. He also spent four years at the BarCelona Tapas & Rice restaurant in Macao, as well as a year at the St Regis Zhuhai luxury hotel. "I was born and raised in Macao," he says. "So, I really hope to make Macanese cuisine stand out among the best cuisines in the world in the future."

Calangi also says he is excited to showcase Macanese cuisine at Soda Port. "Macao is such a cultural melting pot," he says. "It's

really amazing that the city still keeps its own local culture while mixing with so many others." In addition to this, he also thinks Macao provides abundant resources to the professionals. "Compared to Europe," he says, "chefs in Macao are flooded with resources." However, in order to further

elevate the Macanese culinary experience, he thinks diners must keep an open mind when it comes to authenticity. "The biggest difficulty I've encountered as a chef," he says, "is that sometimes it's difficult for the guests to understand and differentiate authentic cuisine from their personal preference of palette."

The reason, says Calangi, that 'not many people are willing to accept and appreciate the authenticity of different cuisines' is because of their 'cultural differences and distinct lifestyles'. But he nevertheless illustrates the importance of authenticity using a French saying: 'A meal is a meal and

you should enjoy every meal as it is'. "I think our subjectivity sometimes limits the beauty of authenticity and the whole culinary experience," he says. "But I believe it will gradually gain acceptance and people will even ask for more authenticity as the food landscape in Macao continues to blossom over the coming years."



Jeronimo Reinaldo Calangi

"I see food in Macao's restaurants as a valuable sharing moment that's created by a group of chefs from different cultural backgrounds. That's really enthralling to me."

– Jeronimo Reinaldo Calangi



On the right train

Unlike the previous five chefs, Otilia Novo doesn't cook for customers or for her own culinary studies. At just 29 years old, she teaches others. Novo is a culinary trainer at the Wynn Food & Beverage Academy, an institution

that coaches both current chefs and the young cooks of tomorrow at the Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace entertainment complexes. She is responsible for providing in-house training programmes and workshops to the complexes' culinary teams, which cover topics like food safety and gastronomic culture. She's already built up a wealth of culinary experience and she's well qualified – in 2015, she was one of the first

people in the city to graduate from the culinary arts management degree course at the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT). She then worked at a modern Italian restaurant for two years before undertaking a year's work experience at The Manor – a fine dining restaurant at the St Regis Hotel – in 2017.

Novo was born and raised in a Macanese family in Macao. She cut her gastronomic teeth when she grew up cooking with her parents. "My father is a good cook," she says. "I enjoyed cooking with him when I was young because I was not the kind of kid who would just sit and behave." Since those early days, Novo – who is a certified culinary mentor, food safety instructor and even an examiner in the subject – has enjoyed a life of winning awards. In 2013, she won the first-ever Young Macanese Cooking Competition, which is now run every year by the Macau Culinary Association (MCA) and held at the IFT. A year later, she won a gold prize at the Tasty Europe Cooking Competition in Macao, which was run by the European Union and assessed how good local chefs were at dishing up meals inspired by the continent's cuisine. In 2017, she won the IFT's 10th Young Chef Competition, two years after she had studied at the institute.

When she turned 26 years old, Novo says she quit her full-time job at The Manor because she felt the urge to 'broaden her horizons in the culinary world'. "I felt like it was time to step out of the city and learn more about other cultures," she says. "So, I went to Florence in Italy with my friend for a year." That was in 2018 and it was in that

historical city that Novo took on a one-year course called 'master in Italian cuisine' at the Florence University of the Arts. She claims the course and qualification 'served as a springboard' for her career as a trainer as it improved her technical experience and knowledge in the kitchen. She also says it was a 'remarkable journey' that allowed her to delve into the food culture of European countries and exchange culinary ideas with other talents across the globe. She returned to Macao after graduation faced with important career decisions. "I eventually chose to work in the training sector in Macao," she says, "because this sector goes beyond food. It gives me a more complete picture of the food and beverage industry."

Sociable and insightful, Novo says that her trainer role 'perfectly aligns' with her expertise and personality. "In hindsight," she says, "I believe my DNA is in the food and beverage sector but I also enjoy working with culinary teams." She thinks the role as a trainer allows her to 'step back' and see the importance of the different segments in the food and beverage industry, helping her to gain a much deeper insight into the local food service industry. And she is also alive to changing her communication skills depending on who she is training – older, more experienced chefs or the new generation of talents. "In the future," she concludes, "I want to continue in this training role so that I can help nurture future chefs. Cooking is an art. It can take years to successfully develop your own style and I would like to help the next generation along its way."

Mentoring is key

Young chefs in Macao have many organisations to turn to for help when they're crafting their art. One of them is the MCA, a non-profit association which is committed to connecting and supporting young chefs who are either studying food-related courses or who are undergoing internships and apprenticeships at restaurants and food institutions. The association offers these young talents a wide range of opportunities to foster their professional and personal development in the field. MCA president Matt Helm, who has headed up the kitchens in some of the world's best eateries over many years, believes that innovative and eager young chefs in Macao thrive when provided with 'good mentorship, workplaces and influences'.

Helm says that the MCA is 'dedicated to providing a platform for annual local culinary competitions where chefs can showcase their creativity and skill sets while also providing opportunities to create new networks that have the potential to open new doors'. "It is very satisfying to put people together and help them to network, evolve and communicate," he says. "We have a lot of professionals in Macao who are willing to give their time and experience to mentor these young chefs and we've noticed that a lot of them are looking for new

ways to be innovative. That could mean, for instance, how to publicise themselves, their talents, their cuisine or their establishments, as in the beginning it can be quite daunting. To be able to assist and witness these young chefs rise to their aspirations is extremely inspiring."

Macao is an 'extraordinary city with a hospitable community', according to Australia-born Helm. "People here are from all walks of life and they love to help each other," he says. "I hope that young chefs in the city can remain passionate and learn as much as they can while also keeping an open mind and being flexible. They must always be positive and humble and appreciate their surroundings." With so many young chefs cooking up a storm in Macao, it's up to everyone else to be positive about the future of gastronomy in the city and to appreciate the culinary surroundings that are already being built by this new generation of extraordinary talents. ●



Otilia Novo



Matt Helm

Our man in Shanghai



Anthony Sousa Tam is one of the top chefs in Shanghai – but his roots are forever planted in his homeland of Macao. Meet one of our city’s most talented and best-known culinary representatives in mainland China.

Text **Matt Fleming**
Images courtesy of **Anthony Sousa Tam**



Some professionals finish school, get lucky with their first job and then rise to the top in the same company or organisation before enjoying a life of success and happiness. Others have to graft and work hard across multiple jobs before they achieve their dreams. A third group of people, however, travel the world and get as much experience as they can from as many people and cultures as possible before they are ready to lead and excel themselves. Anthony Francis Sousa Tam is in this small third group. This chef from Macao has worked across the globe for years and now represents the city at one of Shanghai’s top organic and health-orientated restaurants.

Tam is well-known on Macao’s culinary circuit – not least because he created the Japas Japanese-and-tapas fusion restaurant in the city despite being based in Shanghai. The 46-year-old’s career may have started in the kitchens of London more than 20 years ago but his passion for food began during his early years growing up in Macao, where he was a Macanese cuisine enthusiast. In fact, Tam is heavily influenced by Macanese cooking and food. He has a flair for bringing out the best of every ingredient he uses in its natural form.

But Tam now works for the Octave Institute in mainland China, which is a ‘wellbeing platform that fuses Eastern wisdom with Western science’. Under the institute, he is executive chef at Thought for Food at The Living Room in Shanghai, as well as at Sangha by Octave in

nearby Suzhou. He brings ‘a unique experience only attainable by combining only the best organic ingredients’ at The Living Room, which is actually an urban wellness centre that celebrates ‘mindful eating’ at its Thought for Food restaurant.

“Every day I enjoy developing new concepts that not only give myself but our customers a healthy way to continue with their lives.”

Macanese cooking is not Tam’s only influence. He is also adept at Chinese cuisine thanks to his background in Macao and he has a ‘great respect’ for Japanese cooking after previously working in some of London’s top Japanese restaurants. He still frequently visits the Asian country to gain inspiration. He says that healthy and organic cooking is also ‘at the heart of’ what he does as he creates ‘a harmonious symmetry’ with all of his dishes. He adds that he is ‘proud to represent Macao on the world stage’.

A taste of home

Tam was born and raised in Macao. His mother is Macanese and he says she’s ‘an amazing cook’. “She is at the heart of all of our family gatherings,” he says, “with many traditional dishes always ready to feast on.” Tam says that growing up in Macao was a ‘very important part’ of his culinary journey from a young age. He notes: “The combination of Chinese and Portuguese cuisine that is so readily available in Macao has always had a strong influence on how I create a dish.”

“My first interest in cooking began when I was a young teenager,” continues Tam. “I was never satisfied with a typical quick noodle snack at home during my lunch-break from school every day. I always found a way to make a tastier lunch for myself. If I did noodles, for instance, I was always adding vegetables, sauces and meat. This experimentation with flavours and ingredients set me up for a life of cooking.”

Tam says that after he left school, he travelled to the UK and studied architecture. He had a love for buildings but it was while he was working on his degree that he found his overwhelming passion was for cooking. He did part-time work in kitchens and began to develop a flair for the art. “I started doing basic jobs in some Chinese restaurants in London,” he says. “In some of these restaurants, I was lucky to work my way up the chain. As a result, when I finished my course I had the

confidence to apply for more skilled positions in some of London's best high-end restaurants. I had found my passion and career at this point."

When it comes to a who's who of London's top restaurants, all you need to do is read through Tam's employment history. First, he worked as a sous chef in the kitchens at Busaba – famous for its Thai salads, noodles and curries – between January 1996 and April 1997. Then he landed a job as a sous chef at a couple of Nobu restaurants in London, which are part of one of the most famous Japanese-Peruvian chains in the world. He worked for the chain – which boasts filmstar Robert De Niro as one of its founders – between May 1997 and September 1999 before making the grade as head



chef at Tsunami, a famous modern Japanese eatery in London, between September 1999 and May 2001. He next took his Chinese cooking knowledge to Hakkasan in the capital city between May 2001 and April 2002. From there, he moved north and joined the Chino Latino pan-Asian chain, where he worked as head chef across its restaurants in Nottingham and Leeds during the second half of 2002.

Between July 2003 and July 2004, Tam worked for Annabel's in London as sous chef. This was a departure from his Asian roots as it was the first time he'd delved into European cuisine as Annabel's is an exclusive private member's club which offers up some of the best classic Italian and French dishes in the country. But it was back to Asian cooking after that as Tam scored a role as head chef and part-owner of pan-Asian restaurant Geisha in Nottingham between August 2004 and July 2006.

Then Tam was head chef at modern Japanese restaurant Atami in London until January 2007 before making the grade as executive chef back at Chino Latino in the capital until April 2008. "I worked as a sous chef at restaurants like Nobu and Busaba and worked my way up the ladder," says Tam. "These were all very much coming into their own when I worked for these now renowned restaurants. I like to think that I helped them build a base that lives up to their reputation today."

Experienced and enthusiastic

By 2008, Tam had amassed an incredible amount of experience. He even cooked for British supermodel Kate Moss at her wedding. But he had one last role as head chef at London's Inamo pan-Asian restaurant before he left for Baku in Azerbaijan at the end of 2008 to work for Chinar on the banks of the Caspian Sea. He was executive chef at the Asian restaurant until the end of 2009. Tam says: "This was an exciting position for me as the owners, staff and customers were so dedicated to this place. I am happy that some of the classic dishes I created with the staff are still the top sellers many years later."

From 2009, Tam did a diploma with ultra-famous Spanish chain El Bulli before taking placements

under top chef Michel Bras at Bras in France and at Noma in Copenhagen, Denmark, all in 2010 and 2011. He also frequently cooked for the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and his family over a four-and-a-half year period. Tam says: "It was an honour to work for the President and his family. The Azeri cuisine is as unique as Macanese cuisine. I gained so much experience and knowledge about this beautiful culture which I often implement into my style of cooking."

And that – alongside stints working with Momo in Amsterdam, Pier 7 in Beirut, and both Yuzu Japanese restaurant and Root organic eatery in Macao – brings us up to date. Apart from when he opened Japas in 2016, which is still going strong. And apart from his main current role. In 2012, he landed the job of executive chef at The Living Room and he's been in the role ever since. "It's a health-driven concept that I have passionately built with the owners and creators," he says, "and every day I enjoy the new and developing concepts that not only give myself but our customers a healthy way to continue with their lives. I've been able to develop these ideas with the support of doctors, nutritionists and health experts and this gives me an amazing platform to be creative and realise my passion for healthy, sustainable food."

Tam says he has a 'unique and creative approach to flavours' at The Living Room. He says: "The combination of growing up with the unique flavours of my home country and working in many high-end restaurants where the customers' demand is for something unique has



meant that I have had access to many amazing ingredients. I'm drawn to the source of any ingredient. I'm passionate about natural flavours and an ingredient's health properties. I love to see how much of an ingredient I can use to make something that my customers will find not only tasty but will also be impressed. I like to take diners on a journey that includes learning about where their food is sourced." Tam also says that he feels 'much comfort' when he returns to Macao 'where it takes a lot less time to find my favourite noodle place'. "I feel proud and enthusiastic when I find a new place to eat in Macao," he says. "We have a unique cuisine and a diverse culture – and we're passionate about food."

It's been a tough year for businesses across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "The current times are hard for everyone in the industry," says Tam, "but food will always be at the heart of home and family. Modern technology will benefit home cooks but ultimately

I believe that taking time away from the daily routine and coming together to eat a delicious meal at a restaurant will forever be at the centre of all societies."

Anthony Sousa Tam has indeed had a colourful career in restaurants across the world over many years. And there's much more to come from him in the future too as he represents Macao on the global stage. "In the future," he exclaims, "I hope to develop my keen interest in food as medicine. I will also continue to be as sustainable as possible while, at the same time, giving my customers more unforgettable and exciting experiences." That's for Tam's customers but what about any messages for young, up-and-coming chefs in Macao and mainland China? "Always look to your ancestors for experiences and knowledge of food," he advises, "But mainly, trust your instincts and dare to be different. Always try new things. That's what I've done and I've enjoyed the journey every step of the way." ●



SPORTS

Master of the cap

Capoeira expert Eddy Murphy brought his exceptional skills in this Brazilian martial art to Macao over a decade ago. He's now looking to expand his influence in the city as scores of his young students learn not just how to excel in the sport but also how to respect others.

Text Erico Dias Photos Oswald Vas

Mestre Eddy Murphy executes a basic capoeira evasive move called an 'esquiva' with one of his students, Caleb 'Pensador'

When many people think of martial arts, they think of Bruce Lee or karate experts chopping thick planks of wood with their bare hands. But there's far more types of martial art than just the traditions and codified systems of combat. There are also those arts that have been developed for competition and physical, mental and spiritual development. Capoeira – an Afro-Brazilian form that combines dance, acrobatics and music – falls, these days at least, into this category. And there's no-one more skilled at capoeira in Macao than Eddy Murphy.

Edilson Almeida – widely known in Macao as Mestre Eddy Murphy, which is Portuguese for 'master' or 'teacher' – is a seasoned capoeira professional. He's trained all his life to become an expert in this martial art that was originally developed by enslaved Africans in Brazil at the start of the 16th century and is known for its complex acrobatic manoeuvres, often involving hands on the ground and inverted kicks. He grew up in a tough community on the streets of São Paulo, Brazil, but he has dedicated himself to capoeira throughout his life and now teaches the art to keen athletic people of all ages in Macao.

Capoeira is considered one of Brazil's national sports and its movements are regularly accompanied by call-and-response choral singing, as well as the sounds of instruments like the single-stringed berimbau, the drum-like pandeiro and the

shrill-sounding agogo bell. It has a storied history as it was both driven and disguised as merely a dance by its musical accompaniment from the 16th century in Brazil and was originally designed to give slaves a chance to escape and survive as it increases the artist's ability to react quickly and dodge blows, as well as training them to use effective kicks and trips. Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888 but capoeira nevertheless continued to flourish and, as a result, it was illegal in the South American country until the 1930s. It's best described these days not as a dance but as a sport in which the participants face each other and swing their legs or somersault in time to the rhythms.

Contemporary capoeira

Eddy Murphy belongs to Grupo Axé Capoeira, one of the biggest organisations in the world that teaches contemporary capoeira to children as well as adults. With its headquarters in Vancouver, Canada, it was founded in 1982 by Mestre Barrão in Recife, Brazil, before it grew and established academies outside of South America, including in Canada, the US, Europe and Asia. It's been in Macao since 2009. The organisation is now in 28 countries but it boasts only five masters of the art – Mestre Barrão, Mestre Carrasco and Mestre Andrezinho in Brazil, Mestre Tigrão in Canada and Mestre Eddy Murphy in Macao.



Image courtesy of Mestre Eddy Murphy



The world we live in is diverse. You need to respect colour, religion and people. Respect is my base.

– Eddy Murphy

Murphy’s journey began more than a decade after Mestre Barrão started the group. He grew up in relative poverty in Brazil but spent his early life learning the intricacies of this martial art on the streets, as well as in workshops and lessons with ‘old masters’. He also learned to play football to a decent standard and had the chance to make a career out of the sport but admits that ‘capoeira chose me’. He became so good at it that he managed to get a placement in Barcelona, Spain, between 1999 and 2001 teaching capoeira to enthusiastic pupils. In 2001, he moved to Asia for the first time, setting up home in Hong Kong, where he immediately grabbed the attention of locals by showcasing his moves at Victoria Park, the biggest park in the city. He says that most locals had never seen capoeira in action before and they were ‘astounded’ by his unique moves. “Come on, let me teach you,” he



Lea ‘Pimentinha’ and Beckett ‘Lua’ (left and right) perform a ‘ponte’ backbend stretch and Teresa ‘Pipoca’ (centre) performs a ‘bananeira’ handstand at Eddy Murphy’s club; (opposite page) Murphy holds a ‘berimbau’ percussion instrument

recalls telling people – and that’s just what he did for the next two years.

In 2003, Murphy moved up to Dongguan and Shenzhen, two close cities just north of the border. The 53-year-old admits it was a ‘difficult time’ for him as he spoke no Mandarin but he began to learn and soon spoke ‘about 50 per cent and was able to survive’. His big break came soon after when one of China’s biggest TV channels, Hunan TV, approached him as they were searching for ‘foreigners with special talents’. He was featured doing a few performances and staff at a gym in Macao caught the show. They were fascinated and called him up, asking him to put on a few

demonstrations for their members. He did and it went down a storm. He went back to the mainland for the next six years, however Macao didn’t forget his skills. In 2009, the city’s Universal Yoga gym signed him up as an instructor and he moved to the SAR. But he lasted just 10 months before the gym closed its doors. “I remember thinking ‘What am I going to do now?’ when it closed,” says Murphy. “But even in 10 months I had made a bond with my students and they would go on to help me.”

Those students in Macao provided a lifeline for Murphy in 2009. “They helped me a lot,” he says. “They stuck with me after the gym closed and I began to

teach them on my own. Soon enough, I started my own official club.” The Capoeira Sports and Cultural Association of Macau (ADCCM) was launched in 2009 under Murphy’s leadership and the tenets and affiliation of Grupo Axé Capoeira. It started with just a handful of students and today caters for 15 adults and more than 120 children in up to 18 classes every week. “I’m thankful to those people,” says Murphy. “They helped me open a door. But I also worked hard to make the ADCCM what it is today. I’ve been here ever since, teaching capoeira to individuals and groups, old and young, novices and experienced people.”

Know your capoeira

Facts about this unique martial art

- 1
- Capoeira began in Brazil in the 16th century.
- 2
- It was derived from traditions brought across the Atlantic Ocean by enslaved Africans and was fuelled by the burning desire for freedom.
- 3
- Slavery in Brazil was abolished in 1888. By then, capoeira was known as the ‘dance of criminals’.
- 4
- It remained against the law to practice in Brazil until the 1930s.
- 5
- Capoeira artists were once used as bodyguards or hitmen.
- 6
- The purpose of capoeira isn’t to hit your opponent. It’s to manoeuvre them into a position where you can trap them. This is done in a ‘roda’, a Portuguese word that means ‘wheel’.
- 7
- Mestre Bimba founded the first capoeira school in 1932.
- 8
- Capoeira was taught outside Brazil for the first time in 1970.
- 9
- Today, capoeira is seen as a symbol of Brazilian culture across the world.
- 10
- Theatrical capoeira demonstrations can be seen in many cities and countries but the martial arts element is always there.

Image courtesy of Mestre Eddy Murphy



Mestre Eddy Murphy performing with his wife and children in 2014

Have a little respect

Murphy describes himself as an ‘easy person’ because his life is all about respect. “The world we live in is diverse,” he says. “You need to respect colour, religion and people. Respect is my base.” He says that he loves capoeira and teaching it to children and adults is ‘joyous’. And he reveals that he got his nickname because of the famous American actor who has just starred in ‘Coming 2 America’ – although filmstar Eddie Murphy spells his first name differently. The capoeira star got his nickname – a common practice in groups of capoeiristas to describe your character traits and cement the family spirit of the group – from one of his early mentors, Mestre Big Dinho. Murphy began to learn capoeira at 10 years old. “I started in a class,” he says. “I used to joke with the class and make everyone happy. I’ve been the same ever since. Mestre Big Dinho pulled me aside one day



Hailey Kon and Nola ‘Estrela’ perform a ‘bênção’, which is a front push kick; (right) Caleb ‘Pensador’ and Isabel ‘Gata’ perform a ‘ponte’

due to my jokes and said ‘You’re Eddy Murphy’.” Since those days, Murphy has travelled to more than 25 countries across the world and he says that in all of them, ‘only a few of my friends know my real name’. “Even in my hometown of São Paulo,” he adds, “when someone calls out my name, I take a while to realise they are talking to me.” Mestre Big Dinho and Mestre Barrão have shaped Murphy’s life a lot over the years. He lost both parents at a young age but he says Mestre Big Dinho was his ‘father figure’ as well as his first mentor who taught him an ‘incredible amount’ about capoeira. Later in

life, when Murphy visited Canada, Mestre Barrão taught Murphy ‘how to be a professional in capoeira’, as well as ‘the rights and wrongs of the sport’. When asked about the popularity of capoeira in Macao, Murphy admits that ‘currently, it’s hard’ due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Before the pandemic,” he says, “there were three capoeira teachers in the city. But now it’s just me. You really need a professional to teach you capoeira – it is difficult to learn. It has also been difficult to teach during the pandemic due to many students not being able to make classes or even classes not

going ahead but now we are coming through that and we look forward to a bright future.” Murphy has a son in Macao – 23-year-old Flecha – who he calls his ‘right arm’. “My son has helped me during this difficult period,” says Murphy. “He has kept me going with my practice and he is becoming skilled at the sport himself. Sadly, he was recently injured and has gone to Brazil for a while to recover but I hope he will return to Macao again soon.” Murphy adds that ‘once the pandemic ends’, he hopes to grow his club by getting in two or three new capoeira experts from across the world to teach the students.



Opening new windows

Capoeira is excellent for both physical and mental strength, says Murphy. “It has also helped me open new windows,” he says, “in Macao and across the world.” In his teens, he says that being proficient at the sport on the streets was important so ‘you could put up a good fight when challenged to a duel’ which, if you won, would ‘prove your worth and earn you some experience’. He says the streets of Brazil are

different today but capoeira is no less respected as a tradition and a sport that is great to participate in or even just to watch. “Being one of Grupo Axé Capoeira’s five masters,” says Murphy, “is a huge privilege. It has taken me to so many countries where I can work with other students and teachers.” He says that two years ago, he visited ‘12 different places’ across the world in just 12 months. “I admired Russia,” he says. “The people

didn’t speak English but they were really respectful. Respect opens up new ways to learn as if you show someone respect, you can learn from them and vice-versa. Some of my students in Macao are as young as three years old. They learn respect at that age like all of the people in my classes.” Murphy says that, for his students, ‘before you even step through the door, you leave all your problems on the other side and come in with a clean and open mind’.

Racism and bullying are also hot topics in Murphy’s classes. “My classes are a tool that I can use to help make people better at dealing with racism or bullying,” he says. “Most of my students are young – they are the foundation of our future. If they can become better people then the future will be a better place.” Murphy adds that his goal is to be the young people’s ‘father figure’ or ‘at least someone they can one day look up to and say they are who they are because of my teaching, just like I did with Mestre Big Dinho’.

Mestre Eddy Murphy has had an impressive and colourful career so far and he is looking forward to many more years of passing those capoeira skills on to thousands of others. He says he loves Macao and plans to expand his club and influence over the coming years in a bid to keep this unique martial art in the public eye. He is highly motivated by this and applies this motivation as much to himself as he does to his students. “Never give up,” he says. “Not only in capoeira or in sport – but in life too. Always keep an open mind and never stop trying. Sometimes you want to go in one direction and you hit a wall. You may want to give up but don’t. There’s another door nearby. Step aside, open that door and keep going. Other opportunities are waiting for you.” ●

Get in touch

For details on Eddy Murphy’s club, email him at axecapoeiraasia@gmail.com.

Mestre Eddy Murphy (front, centre) with his students at his club

MEET THE CAPOEIRISTAS

A few words from Eddy Murphy’s students



António Raquel, five years old.
Nickname: ‘Boneco’
“Master Eddy is so funny and so good. I enjoy learning capoeira with him.”



Teresa Raquel, eight years old.
Nickname: ‘Sol’
“I like how you exercise and I like the music. I like Master Eddy because he is so funny.”



George Mervyn Seward Griffiths, 11 years old.
Nickname: ‘Alemão’
“I love kicking, acrobatics and singing. Master Eddy is caring and tough.”



Hailey Kon, eight years old.
No nickname... yet.
“Capoeira is fun for me. I like playing with the other students.”



Adrien Kon, six years old.
Nickname: ‘Energia’
“I like playing with Master Eddy. He is crazy and funny.”



Juliana Gabriella Martinez, seven years old.
Nickname: ‘Bombom’
“I like the ‘roda’.
Master Eddy always makes it fun.”



Filipa Santos, 38 years old. Nickname: ‘Felina’
“We’re all treated as family. It’s an inclusive group which is important for the values that we try to teach our kids and ourselves too.”



André Raquel, 38 years old. Nickname: ‘Pena’
“Master Eddy is someone who is very important in capoeira worldwide. He has a lot to teach to the kids and the adults.”



SPORTS

Warriors of the winter waves

Swimming in the seas around Macao during the coldest weeks of winter may not be everyone's cup of tea but some local residents swear by it. Frosty and refreshing, open-water winter swimming has become a favourite pastime for those who find community, mental stamina and physical endurance in the icy ocean waves.

Text Vivianna Cheong Photos António Sanmarful

Ricardo César de Sá

Picture the scene: it's the middle of winter and you've just dressed up in your coat, hat and gloves and gone for a morning stroll along Macao's coastline. Sure, the city is hardly freezing during the winter but some warm clothes are nevertheless important as the sun is rising in the crisp sky. You marvel at the vistas and the birds as you walk by the water's edge and then – what on Earth is that? It looks like a man in his swimming trunks paddling around in what must be an icy cold sea. Surely he has lost his mind?

No, that man has not lost his mind. It's Mun Hong Cheong, one of Macao's stalwart open-water winter swimmers, who swears by the health benefits of hitting the ocean's waves when the city's temperature is at its coldest. As we enter spring, these low temperatures are already a distant memory but Cheong and his brave friends will be in the sea again next winter and every winter after that. In fact, Cheong doesn't even just go for a swim every winter – he's been doing it almost every day for the past three decades. So it's a good time to ask him why he does it.

Before sunrise every day is the preferred time for Cheong to embark on his morning swim. The 64-year-old wakes around 5.30am and canoes for more than an hour from Cheoc Van beach to Lotus Bridge, which connects Cotai with Hengqin Island, before returning to Cheoc Van to swim in the – at winter, at least – icy cold water. "After canoeing," he says, "swimming is a way for me to relax. You never know the zing of winter swimming if you haven't tried it." During the winter, according to Cheong, the water temperatures around Macao range from one to eight degrees Celsius. "Once you have finished swimming and cleaned off," he says, "you feel enveloped in freshness. You also experience a better appetite, deeper sleep, better mental strength and will be less likely to catch a cold."

Like Cheong, many people have fallen in love with winter swimming in Macao over the years. Not only do they cite many health benefits but they also appreciate the social, relaxing atmosphere at clubs like the Macao Winter Swimming Club – officially known as Clube de Nadadores de Inverno de Macau. As one of the city's 19 dedicated swimming clubs, the group welcomes roughly 50 swimmers who regularly enjoy the open-water exercise all winter long. "You can still go winter swimming in Cheoc Van without joining our club," says Cheong, "but our members really appreciate the community atmosphere. We have members from all walks of life, from various industries, such as finance, construction and navigation. What we share in common is that we want to stay healthy and meet friends who also love winter swimming."



Mun Hong Cheong

Wave of interest

Brave Macao residents may have always swam in the SAR's surrounding seas during the winter but it wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that the pastime began to first gain popularity. Intrepid icy water enthusiasts from across town would regularly head for the coast during this period – particularly at NAPE, where a series of changing sheds had been installed next to the shore. These served as places to shower and relax after a chilly dip so many locals would convene in the area throughout the day. By 1975, the most hardy of these swimmers had started to get to know each other so they took the natural next step: They formed a club.

The Macao Winter Swimming Club was not officially registered as an organisation in 1975. In fact, that didn't happen for another decade. But between the mid-1970s and the official club establishment in 1985, the roots of the organisation were formed by like-minded individuals who simply loved taking a dip in the waves during the winter. And it was only two years after the club was formally established when the city held its first New Year Winter Swimming Competition, pulling in at least 100 participants to brave the icy waters of the Outer Harbour. It was a success and shone a spotlight on these swimmers – even inspiring other similar clubs to pop up, like the Macao Workers Swimming Shed organisation which set up five divisional sheds along the coastline. One of these was open to the public, while the other four were assigned to different water-based organisations.

In the late 1980s, the Macao Winter Swimming Club grew in size. It merged with another organisation, the Tung Hoi Winter Swimming Club, and became even bigger, showing quite how this pastime that to some people would seem so odd had become so popular. The group was then ready to set up a private clubhouse on Cheoc Van Beach in 1990. “When the two clubs merged,” recalls Cheong, a long-time swimming coach who is now the Macao Winter Swimming Club's executive, “our founding president, Ping Ming Wong, bought a [building] in Cheoc Van with its ground floor for the club to use.” Cheong reckons there were about 20 members of the club in 1990. That may not seem big by today's standards – he notes that there are about 50 members now – but it is still impressive for such a niche activity.

Open-water swimming in cold temperatures is not for everyone, says Cheong, who is no stranger to the activity. He worked as a frogman – a scuba diver and underwater swimmer trained for tactical operations – for the Macao Customs Service department from 1984 to 1994, and also led the custom department's diving team for a few years. He says that even experienced swimmers who have trained as part of a team and hit the water every day might find the pastime disorientating at first because they're used to exercising in pools. “You have a sense of direction in a pool,” he says, “however, since Macao's seawater is quite turbid, it's hard to adjust. Once you're used to open-water swimming, though, you'll love it.”

Deep community

Cheong may prefer the early morning swim like many retired individuals and office workers but he claims that many strong athletes prefer swimming in the dark. It's less about the time of day and more about the time of year. According to Cheong, a deep-rooted community spirit ‘holds everyone together’ at the Macao Winter Swimming Club,

“

What we share in common at Macao Winter Swimming Club is that we want to stay healthy and meet friends who also love winter swimming.

– Mun Hong Cheong

even though its members tend to hit the waves in small groups or solo on their own schedules. The club also participates in events and competitions in mainland China and Hong Kong, he says. “We have been invited to various places,” he notes, “such as Wenzhou and Shaoxing [in Zhejiang province] and Xishuangbanna [in Yunnan

province] for competitions. We also join the Hong Kong New Year Winter Swimming Lifesaving Championships every year.” Those championships were sadly cancelled this year but normally the approximately 800-metre race starts on Middle Bay Beach and finishes at Repulse Bay Jetty. “It's a great gathering,” claims Cheong, “where we travel to Hong Kong in the early morning, swim first thing, then kick about town and enjoy dinner together.”

The club's vice president, Kei Kin Chao, is one of its most dedicated swimmers. The 72-year-old is strong and experienced due to the fact he has swam nearly every day for the past 40 years. “When I was in my 30s,” he recalls, “I remember visiting the swimming sheds – they were made of bamboo at first, then solid wood, followed by cement – and competing with friends in our own winter swimming competitions. Now old friends, [some of us] still meet regularly, diving into the water and relaxing together. It is delightful to swim with friends. They are the reason I still maintain this habit.”

Of course, many things have changed, too. Over the past few years, Chao says he's seen improvements when it comes to water clarity and cleanliness – a positive development for athletes and residents alike. “There used to be quite a lot of rubbish in the sea and on the beach, floating from Hengqin, especially during the summer,” he says. “It happened quite frequently. Over these years, the Municipal Affairs Bureau has done a great job to clear the rubbish. Now Cheoc Van is cleaner.”

Wellspring of choice

This all brings us up to the present day when age, perhaps, is now a factor for the Macao Winter Swimming Club. Cheong says that members now range in age from 35 right up to an impressive 90 years old. This puts the membership on the more mature side and Cheong puts this fact partly down to the ‘wellspring of exercise options’ in Macao. Outdoors, there’s hiking, running, team sports, sailing, paddleboarding, cycling, canoeing and much more besides across the city’s open areas and waters. Then there’s even more indoors, such as gyms, dance and exercise classes. There are even video games and virtual reality devices these days that have an element of exercise to them.

“Unlike the old days,” says Cheong, “when we did not have many choices, the youth of today can do so many things. We do see many young people swimming but open-water winter swimming is usually not their first choice.” He says that it isn’t just the case of rocking up at a beach and jumping into the sea, either. He reckons the pastime really tests your stamina and endurance – and it can be dangerous, depending on the weather conditions, so you have to ‘know what you are doing’. “When it gets very cold,” he says, “with a whipping wind, it is hard to bring yourself to dive into the water. You must have great stamina. But once you get in, your body temperature adjusts to that of the sea.”

Such tough challenges haven’t stopped another Cheong. Felix Keng

Fong Cheong – Mun Hong Cheong’s son – is the youngest member of the club and he too regularly dives in. Guided by his father, he has been swimming in the sea since he was a child. The 35-year-old has also been part of the Macao swimming team for the past decade, competing at national races such as the open-water swimming championships at Qiandao Lake, southwest of Hangzhou in mainland China. He’s also competed in the Hong Kong New Year Winter Swimming Lifesaving Championships and Hong Kong’s New World Harbour Race. Around five years ago, he joined the club because he loved the warmth of the community. “Whenever I go to the club,” he says, “I always see the same people. It feels so different from swimming at a public pool where you swim and leave. Sometimes, the club arranges gatherings and events, such as group dinners or a ceremony for Chinese New Year. The community spirit is strong.”

Like many members of the club, Felix Cheong prefers to swim in the mornings before he goes to work. He describes the activity as a ‘natural’ and ‘invigorating’ way to start the morning, adding that it makes him feel more alert and efficient at work. “Every day,” he says, “the sea feels different – the temperature, surroundings and weather. Sometimes it is too foggy to swim safely. But the hardest part is the moment when you dive into cold water – it really tests your stamina. It’s always a new experience and a challenge.”



Members of the Macao Winter Swimming Club



“

The sea gives me a sensation of freedom. When I swim, I can open my mind and think about my work, day and life deeply.

– Manuel Galdes



Floating his boat

Not everyone has to be a member of the Macao Winter Swimming Club to, well, swim in Macao's waters during the winter. Take Manuel Galdes, who doesn't have a formal membership but nevertheless regularly joins the members for chilly outings. The 70-year-old, who sits on the Macao Military Club's board of directors, fell in love with open-water swimming about two years ago following a lifetime of simply swimming in pools. However, a year before he found his new passion, he suffered from nose inflammation and his doctor recommended that he avoided swimming pools. So he took his first plunge at Cheoc Van Beach – and he was hooked instantly. Ever since, he's visited the beach every morning for a swim.

"I have been in Macao for 33 years now," says Galdes. "It took me 31 years to discover the joy

of open-water swimming. Now, I go swimming at 6am every day." Galdes says that his water-based morning routine takes about an hour. "I park my car and walk to the beach, carrying just my shoes and shorts," he says. "The sea gives me a sensation of freedom. I have many ideas on my mind – about my work, my day and my life. When I swim, I can open my mind and think about them deeply."

It's not just the tranquil calm of the ocean in the morning that has hooked Galdes. He says he also enjoys the social side of open-water swimming. "It's all about the friendships," he says. "The club members are very friendly and the atmosphere is inclusive." He says the club comprises people from all walks of life – some arrive by motorbike, others in luxury cars or vans. Yet a mutual love for swimming in the sea connects them all. "It's a pity that I can't speak Cantonese and some members don't speak Portuguese

but we can still communicate," he says. "They always give me advice on swimming in the sea."

"When you swim," continues Galdes, "you don't put any pressure on your body parts, unlike in jogging. I feel a sense of harmony. I sleep deeper." After two years of regular open-water swimming, he says he feels stronger and more in tune with his body. "Morning swims make me feel a little bit tired [at first]," he says, "especially at my age, but I feel more energised [in the long run]." For Galdes, Chao and the Cheongs, this is as much a lifestyle as it is a sport or pastime. Maybe next time you spot someone swimming in Macao's open waters during the winter, you won't think they've lost their mind. Instead, perhaps, understand that they're just going over things in their mind as they take their healthy and bracing swim at a time when you'd rather be sipping a coffee and reading a newspaper indoors. ●

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PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Port of kings

Construction is underway on a huge state-of-the-art deep-water port in Timor-Leste. Meet some of the key people behind this mammoth project – and discover how it’s strengthening ties between the Portuguese-speaking country and China.

Text **Fei Pou Lo** Images courtesy of the **China Harbour Engineering Company**



On 20 May 2022, Timor-Leste will celebrate its 20th birthday. The ‘Restoration of Independence Day’ event is sure to be a grand occasion when Asia’s youngest nation, which occupies half of the island of Timor between Australia and Indonesia, marks two decades since it left behind war, invasions by the Indonesians and the Japanese, and colonial rule by the Portuguese. But this celebration won’t just be about looking back over 20 years of independence and progress. It will be about looking forward to a bright future filled with prosperity, freedom and vastly improved infrastructure – with one massive, state-of-the-art port shining like a beacon at the forefront of the country’s major current developments.

Timor-Leste is a Portuguese-speaking country which, following its independence in 2002, has experienced a slow development in its infrastructure – an infrastructure that was heavily damaged by anti-independence militia groups in 1999. But now, the nation – home to just under 1.3 million people and rich in offshore oil and gas – is in the process of diversifying its economy and improving its infrastructure. Leaders have been looking to strengthen homegrown businesses, including in the capital Dili, as they have also been working to improve the infrastructure both inside and outside the city. And this includes all of the frequently congested port facilities – principally those at Tibar Bay Port.

Tibar Bay, which sits on the shores about

12 kilometres to the west along the coastline from Dili, was first earmarked for development and private sector investment in the early 2010s with a view to it achieving rapid and sustainable growth. The project set sail with a financial close in August 2018 and work began in July of the following year. Now it’s all well underway on a new US\$206 million (MOP 1.6 billion) – predicted by some to go up to US\$490 million (MOP 3.9 billion) once all works are done – deep-water port which will handle up to 350,000 containers annually – predicted by some to go up to more than 750,000 eventually – and will have a new 630-metre-long pier and a raft of new buildings. It will be a multipurpose facility, handling all types of cargo, including containers and vehicles and it will also be home to an access channel and berth 16 metres deep so that it can receive large vessels. It’s the largest infrastructure project ever to be carried out in Timor-Leste and it isn’t only the local people who have been working on the site. Chinese workers have also been involved from the start.



Work is well underway on the Tibar Bay Port project; (right) a platform just off the port’s shoreline

Working together

For nearly two years, workers from China and Timor-Leste have been toiling together daily to construct this massive infrastructure project in the natural sheltered bay of Tibar that the country’s government hopes will put an end to future bottlenecks around the port. Making sure everything is on track and on time – a task made even more demanding by the COVID-19 pandemic – is Wang Wei, country manager for Timor-Leste for China Harbour Engineering Construction (CHEC), one of the construction companies working on the site. CHEC, founded in 1980, is itself a subsidiary of China Communications Construction Company and it won the tender to join the project in 2017 and started work in 2019.

Wang tells us he is particularly proud of the technical work that CHEC workers have been undertaking at Tibar Bay Port – complex even for such a construction giant from China. But he says he’s also proud of the fact that out of the roughly 800 CHEC staff members on the site – including the management team, technicians and labourers – local workers from Timor-Leste make up the majority, which equates to around 60 per cent of the total.

In 2016, the Tibar Bay project was awarded by the Timor-Leste government to French company Bolloré Ports. The European giant was given the job of designing,

constructing, owning and operating the port before it is due to pass ownership back to the government in 30 years’ time under a development basis known as design-build-finance-operate-transfer (DBFOT). The new port, when it opens next year, will help to ease congestion on the seas around Tibar Bay and Dili, as well as providing access to bigger vessels which is expected, in turn, to reduce import and export costs in the country. Bolloré was key in recommending CHEC’s involvement in the project as it is one of its global business partners.

The fact that Bolloré and CHEC – among other international companies – are part of the project is a milestone for Timor-Leste as it marks the Asia Pacific country’s first-ever large-scale infrastructure public-private partnership arrangement (PPP). It also marks the biggest direct foreign investment for one large-scale infrastructure project in the history of the country. In fact, it’s been a good learning curve for the government in attracting large-scale foreign investment and it’s also highlighted the strong links between China and Timor-Leste. Wang says: “Once the project has proved to be a success, the valuable experience in planning, tendering, transaction, operation and management will be a very good example for similar large-scale infrastructure projects in Timor-Leste in the future, such as at Dili Airport (Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport) and others.”



Much quarrying has been done near the port for vital materials; (inset, top) Timor-Leste ministers and business representatives for the project; (inset, bottom) Timor-Leste Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak at the site (centre) with Timor Port SA director Rafael Ribeiro (left)

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The Tibar Bay Port project reflects the high expectations of the people and government of Timor-Leste over the past few decades.

– Wang Wei

Media plaudits

The Tibar Bay Port PPP has already earned regional plaudits and it hasn't even finished being built yet. In 2019, it was named as a 'winning deal' in the Asia-Pacific region by infrastructure development and finance news and data service IJGlobal at its annual awards ceremony. Wang says: "The Tibar Bay Port project reflects the high expectations of the Timorese people and government over the past few decades and deserves the extraordinary efforts of CHEC for a successful completion."

In terms of engineering, Wang admits that Tibar Bay 'is one of the most difficult port projects ever undertaken' by the Chinese construction giant. This, he says, is because of the 'very rare' geological conditions at the site and the high chance of earthquakes in the region. In spite of any geological difficulties, though, CHEC is expecting its building work to be completed by the early part of next year.

COVID-19 has also been another challenge for the workers but Wang claims that there hasn't been a single case reported in

the construction teams since the outbreak of the pandemic. "All our members have been very disciplined," he says, "and have adhered to the company emergency response plan and the code of joint practice." That code, he adds, was agreed with both Bolloré and the government. And he says that the project has progressed 'non-stop' during the pandemic with three chartered flights ferrying workers to the site from China since construction began. He adds that the teams have been 'trying very hard' to ensure sufficient manpower on the site to keep construction going.

The sea-facing side of the port is nearing completion



Started with a bang

When work kicked off in 2019, the first move was to start blasting nearby quarries to collect construction materials. In a statement from the Chinese embassy in Timor-Leste at the time, the Chinese ambassador to the country, Xiao Jianguo, explained that the use of explosives was a special case. He said that because there was a general ban on explosives in the country, special permission had been given by the Timor-Leste government to CHEC to use them which, he noted, was 'essential and critical to ensure on-time success of the whole project'. He also noted that there were about 20 Chinese firms operating in areas related to infrastructure in Timor-Leste at the time. He said: "Infrastructure is the key area of China-Timor-Leste practical co-operation in which Chinese enterprises have actively and widely participated." He added that 'Chinese companies enjoy good

management, expertise and advanced technologies in the construction of urban buildings, roads and bridges, and airports and seaports, having made great contributions to the infrastructure development' in Timor-Leste.

Xiao also said in the statement that China had provided 'much assistance' to Timor-Leste's infrastructure over the past 17 years of 'China-Timor-Leste diplomatic relations'. He listed projects like the Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace, which opened in 2009 in honour of a national hero, as 'signposts of friendship' between the two countries. Construction of the palace was financed by China. He also cited ongoing co-operative projects, including a digital TV initiative between both nations that will enhance Timor-Leste's media and television industry. "Co-operation in this area between our two countries is of enormous potential," said the ambassador. "I hope that Chinese companies can seize this opportunity and hope the practical co-operation between us can be further strengthened so as to improve the infrastructure and people's well-being in Timor-Leste within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative." The Belt and Road Initiative is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in countries and organisations across the world.

Thanks to much investment, including in major port and airport infrastructure projects, Timor-Leste's economy is expected to grow by 2.5 per cent this year, as predicted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The EIU foresees public investment focused on agriculture, tourism and social sectors, in addition to infrastructure such as the Tibar Bay Port project. Joaquim Amaral, Timor-Leste's Co-ordinating Minister of Economic Affairs, expects the port project at Tibar Bay to 'bring many benefits to the Timorese economy'. These benefits, he tells us, go well beyond the amount of foreign investment into the port, which he estimates at around US\$200 million (MOP 1.6 billion) until it is fully given back to the government. They will include 'avoiding the cost of delays and the diversion of cargo due to congestion' at Dili Port, a nearby major port in the capital city, allowing for 'bigger ships' to dock, which he foresees as bringing 'savings on freight costs due to economies of scale'. Amaral also predicts that the project will



Made in China

One local worker on the Tibar Bay Port project was Timor-Leste's first scholarship recipient to ever graduate in China.

China-Timor-Leste relations at Tibar Bay Port are no more apparent than with Jónio da Anunciação. The CHEC assistant general manager is a Timor-Leste local who left his home more than a decade ago to study in China before returning and working with a number of Chinese businesses thanks to his inimitable skills. He later amassed enough experience to join CHEC and work on the mammoth port project.

Anunciação, who once lived in a naval base in his home country during a time of political crisis, won a scholarship in 2006 to study a tourism management degree at the Beijing International Studies University (BISU) alongside two other students from Timor-Leste who went to BISU and Hangzhou University. In fact, the trio was the first group of locals to ever be granted a scholarship by the Chinese government. The other two students, however, failed to graduate so in June 2011, Anunciação became the first Timor-Leste scholarship recipient to ever graduate in China. He studied in Beijing for five years and says it was a positive experience.

"The success I achieved," says Anunciação, "was in part down to my hard work and in part down to my good relations with my local Chinese friends because they were always willing to help me with classes." He says he worked with the Timor-Leste Embassy in Beijing during and after his studies, helping with his nation's participation in the 2008 Olympic Games, as well as the Shanghai International Expo and Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE). After graduating, he did an internship for a short while at the embassy.

In 2011, Anunciação returned to Timor-Leste to work with Chinese state-owned nuclear power engineering firm China Nuclear Industry 22nd Construction Co. (CNI22) on a power plant project.



He had learned Mandarin so was both a supervisor and interpreter. In 2014, he won another scholarship in China, so went back to study for a master's degree in business and administration. In 2015, he returned to Dili and worked as a public relations chief for China Railway First Group (CRFG) on a highway project. He later worked for another Chinese company on a sea cucumber cultivation initiative before joining CHEC in 2018. Since then, he has become a key part of the port construction team.

Anunciação says that so far the Tibar Bay Port project has been an 'excellent experience'. He says his work includes 'keeping good relations' with government bodies, local companies and other organisations involved in the project. He says: "CHEC gives me the freedom to do the negotiations and discussions with public and private entities based on the company's rules. I can say that with CHEC, I have learned lots." Anunciação adds that CHEC 'knows how to capacitate and increase the local people's knowledge' just like educators in China did for him all those years ago.

herald the development of potential industrial parks around the port. And he adds that the redevelopment of Dili Port ‘is currently being considered’, which he predicts will elevate the ‘quality of life in Dili city centre’.

Amaral says that the Tibar Bay Port project was outlined in a major strategic development plan released by the Timor-Leste government in 2011. In it Dili Port was highlighted as having ‘become an economic bottleneck’ as its existing infrastructure, built by the country’s former Portuguese administration, is no longer fit for the demands of today’s international container shipping industry and does not allow modern large container ships access to the port. He adds that Dili Port is still the main entry and exit point for goods to a country whose population is expected to more than double by 2040. Amaral confirms that operations are due to start next year. He says that when that happens, the area around it will also start to

develop. “With the development of Tibar Bay,” he says, “the area around the port can be turned into an economic hub, attracting new industries and businesses to set foot in Timor-Leste, [thus] generating employment opportunities.”

A new age

Danilo Afonso Henriques, Timor-Leste’s delegate to Macao’s Forum for Economic Trade Co-operation between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries – better known as Forum Macao – expects the Tibar Bay project to add to the young nation’s skills and competitiveness. But the project, he points out, is also part of a larger strategy of upgrading and building infrastructure to support the mobility of people and goods throughout Timor-Leste. Being ‘widely dispersed in a large geographical area’, he says, the country’s population will also benefit from the ongoing upgrading and construction of its national road network, as well as its electricity network, airports, irrigation systems, renewable energies and tourism industry.

He says that those ‘elements’ as well as ‘new developments such as proposed industrial parks’ should ‘create a competitiveness and opportunities for Timor-Leste to explore various economic markets’ with neighbouring countries, across Southeast Asia or even with Macao through the forum he represents.

Henriques says that ‘a synergy exists not only between the size and volume of production and consumption of possible niche markets, as well as historical links, between Timor-Leste and Macao’. He adds that there’s a ‘desire and preference’ for products from Timor-Leste in Macao, particularly agricultural ones ‘which are organic’. He says that good examples of this include the Dili brand coffee that’s produced and exported by a Chinese entrepreneur and is available in Macao, as well as a number of aromatic and therapeutic oils that are imported into Macao for the local market and for mainland China.

According to Henriques, Macao ‘provides an excellent platform’ through Forum Macao ‘to engage on a range of issues, not only in areas of commercial and trade interest but also in human capacity development, where many Timorese have received training, as well as closer people-to-people relations through cultural understanding’. He adds: “Tibar Bay Port underlines Timor-Leste’s aspirations, its development growth in the years since its restoration of independence and our nation’s hope for a prosperous future.” Indeed, if you stand on the seafront at Tibar Bay right now, listening to the construction going on behind you, and look out to sea, you can almost see the future in the distance. A future filled with massive container vessels, improved infrastructure, a prosperous economy and a nation that’s proud of its accomplishments over the past two decades. ●



Gonçalo Lobo Pinheiro

Danilo Afonso Henriques



Tibar Bay Port will be a shining beacon of progress for Timor-Leste once the construction work is finished



ZOOM

Recipes for success

Text **Erris Ho** Images **António Sanmarful**

This issue’s main features have focused on Traditional Chinese Medicine, so it’s only natural that our regular Zoom photographic section is all about showcasing ‘classic’ TCM recipes and ingredients. Dr Zhou Hua, a professor at Macao’s State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine (SKL-QRCM), has helped us choose and photograph eight popular TCM products from the extensive range in the laboratory at the Macau University of Science and

Technology (MUST). Each of these recipes and ingredients have been used in China for thousands of years and many of them are highlighted in books and papers created by one of the most important figures in TCM research, Zhang Zhongjing, almost 2,000 years ago. But a word of caution for anyone who wants to try these products: Dr Zhou emphasises the importance of patients seeking medical advice from a TCM doctor beforehand. So, welcome to our ‘TCM Herb Gallery’ 2021...

Chinese Liquorice

Source	‘Shennong Ben Cao Jing’, traditionally attributed to Shennong.
Ingredients	Chinese liquorice is itself an ingredient in many TCM recipes. It comes from the root of the Chinese liquorice plant that is native to Asia and is commonly used together with other ingredients such as ginseng or bai zhu, a Chinese herb.
Health benefits	Apart from modulating the properties of other TCM ingredients, Chinese liquorice is used to replenish ‘qi’ – your vital energy force – as well as facilitating spleen and stomach functioning and controlling coughing fits.

Weijing Decoction

Source	'Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber', Zhang Zhongjing.
Ingredients	Phragmites large perennial reed grass stems, coix seeds (from tropical grass plants also known as job's tears), wax gourd seeds and peach kernels.
Health benefits	Known as the 'reed decoction', this recipe can clear the lungs and dissolve phlegm. It's used to treat coughs, whooping cough, lung abscesses and even eye disorders.



Maimendong Decoction

Source	'Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber', Zhang Zhongjing.
Ingredients	Ophiopogon (known as 'lily-turf' in the West) perennial herbaceous plant root, ginseng, non-glutinous rice, jujube fruit (also known as Chinese red dates), Chinese liquorice and pinellia root.
Health benefits	This decoction can help asthmatics breathe, can eliminate coughs, can help with dry mouth and nausea, and can help strengthen the stomach and lungs.



Caulis Sinomenii

Source	'Illustrated Classic of Materia Medica', Su Song
Ingredients	Caulis sinomenii is itself an ingredient. It comes from the Sinomenium plant genus, which contains only one known species: Sinomenium acutum, a climbing plant.
Health benefits	This ingredient's main use is as a pain reliever. For thousands of years, it has treated numbness, rheumatic diseases and swelling. It can also help people to urinate.



Ginseng	
Source	'Compendium of Materia Medica', Li Shizhen.
Ingredients	Ginseng is an ingredient that needs no introduction. It is a root from the Panax plant genus that has become popular as a tea across the world in modern times.
Health benefits	It is used to replenish qi among a plethora of other treatments, helping the stomach, spleen and lungs. It's also used to quench thirst, relieve uneasiness and treat impotence. Ginseng is thought to improve memory by protecting the brain's tissue and it has even been recently developed into Ginsenoside Rg3, which is used in cancer cases to inhibit tumour growth.



Gualou Xiebai Baijiu Decoction	
Source	'Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber', Zhang Zhongjing.
Ingredients	Trichosanthes fruit, bulbus allii macrostemi (also known as Chinese garlic) and Chinese white wine.
Health benefits	This decoction has been used to treat cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks, heart failure and arrhythmias, for around 2,000 years. It's also prescribed for mild heart pain and for patients with shortness of breath, wheezing and palpitations.



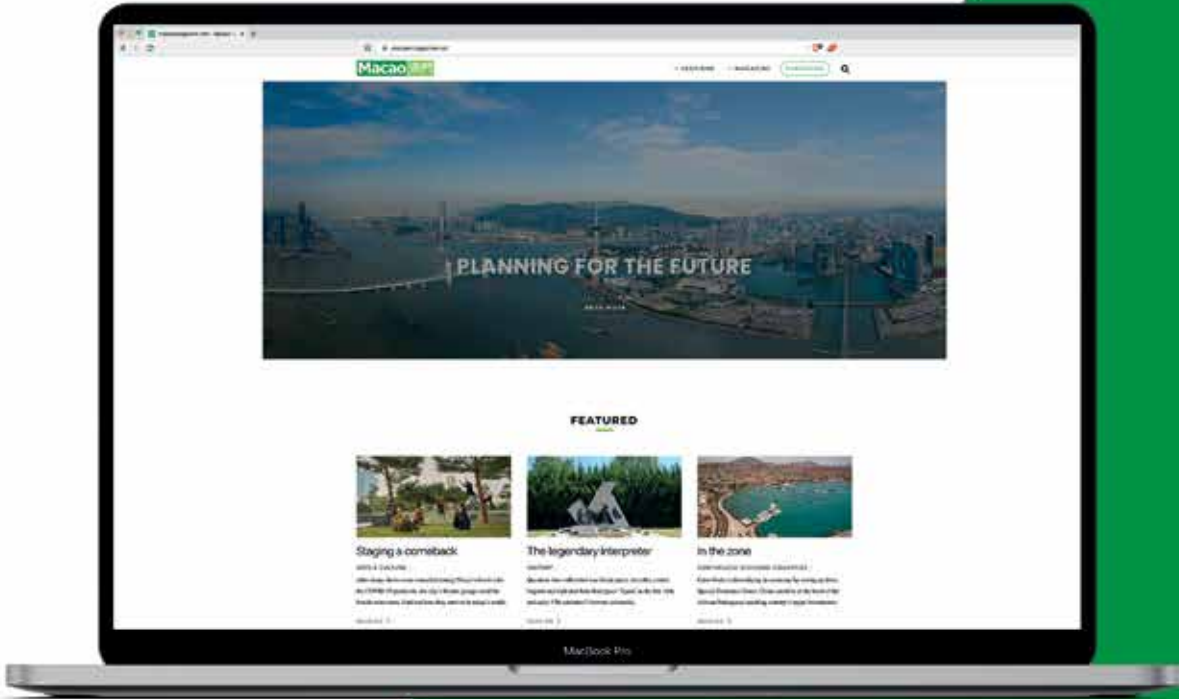
Radix Ophiopogon Soup	
Source	'Treatise on Differentiation and Treatment of Seasonal Warm Diseases', Wu Jutong.
Ingredients	Ophiopogon root, Glehnia (plant genus in the carrot family) root, Polygonatum (flowering plant also known as Solomon's seal) flowers, Chinese liquorice, mulberry leaves, trichosanthes root and purple Dolichos lablab beans.
Health benefits	This soup is used to help boost the immune system and can treat pneumonia, chronic bronchitis and other respiratory diseases.





Maxing Shigan Decoction

Source	'Treatise on Febrile Diseases Caused by Cold and Miscellaneous Diseases', Zhang Zhongjing.
Ingredients	Chinese Ephedra plant, apricot kernels, gypsum fibrosum (plaster stone containing calcium sulphate) and Chinese liquorice.
Health benefits	This recipe is popularly used by asthmatics as it can clear the lungs of phlegm and help stop coughs, wheezes and shortness of breath. Interestingly, it is also used to treat bouts of 'fidgeting'.



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