

Macao

澳門

25 Years of Progress, Patriotism and Prosperity

**PRESIDENT XI JINPING
OFFERS GUIDANCE TO CHIEF
EXECUTIVE-DESIGNATE
SAM HOU FAI**

**MACAO WELCOMES
FORMULA REGIONAL RACING
TO ITS ANNUAL GRAND PRIX**





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COVER IMAGE

Macao's skyline, 25 years in the making. A quarter century of growth, innovation and progress has transformed this vibrant city into a world-class destination - Photo by Weiming Xie

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CONGRATULATIONS ON

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

THE MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION



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MACAO SAR 25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

25 Years On: Macao is a Unique Chinese City

Life in Macao has improved dramatically since Macao's return to the motherland in 1999. That is thanks to the successful implementation of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy. With the strong support of the Central Government, the Macao SAR's government and people from all walks of life have worked together to create the best development situation in Macao's long history.

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Cheong Chi Fong**

A bird's eye view from the southern tip of Macao Peninsula shows just how much the city has grown since its return to the motherland

Over the past quarter century, Macao's traditions, heritage and history have been preserved. And yet, the city has grown. It's modernised and has become more international. As it's done so, the quality of life for everyone who calls it home has improved. Macao has earned its reputation as a harmonious fusion of old with new, local with global.

The region's progress is testament to the strength of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy; a visionary concept

devised by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s. Then the Joint Declaration of the Government of the Portuguese Republic and the Government of the People's Republic of China was signed in accordance with the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy in 1987. This historic accord paved the way for Macao's seamless transition into a flourishing Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China - the 25th anniversary of which we are now celebrating.

During those years, the region has enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from the mainland (two systems) while becoming increasingly integrated with the nation (one country). This dual achievement boils down to unwavering support from the Central Government and the visionary leadership of Presidents Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and now, Xi Jinping.

In the resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on 18 July, the institutional importance of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy was reaffirmed. This policy would both support

Macao's mission to prove itself as an international nexus for high-calibre talent and enhance the SAR's ability to contribute as the nation opens itself up to the outside world, the resolution stated.

A tradition of patriotism in Macao has also laid a solid foundation for the region's harmonious development since its return to the motherland. The historical enactment of national security legislation in 2009, and its subsequent amendment in 2023, were milestones in Macao's integration into national development, demonstrating the region's ability to play a vital role in safeguarding China's national security.



EXPANDING MACAO'S HORIZONS

The establishment of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in 2017 has been instrumental in Macao's integration with the mainland. A powerhouse megalopolis uniting the two SARs and nine cities across southern China, the GBA enables close cooperation between its constituents. The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which opened in 2018, is a highly visible manifestation of the GBA, creating a tangible tripartite linkage between the regions.

The Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, meanwhile, is a GBA initiative enabling Macao to expand beyond its limited land resources. Established in 2021 on Guangdong Province's Hengqin Island, the zone is subject to joint policies designed to smooth the flow of people and goods across borders while unlocking economic potential for Macao's populace and commercial sectors.

Ever-increasing regional connectivity amplifies Macao's reputation as a springboard for foreign companies interested in entering the massive market that is the mainland. The city's role as an intermediary has been gaining traction since the 2003 launch of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, also known as Forum Macao. Leveraging its Lusophone heritage (Portuguese remains one of Macao's official languages), the city serves as a platform for Sino-Lusophone trade through capitalising on deep-rooted cultural connections to facilitate a myriad of exchanges with the mainland.

PROGRESS ON THE GROUND

Macao's geographical footprint, though modest at 33.3 square kilometres, has grown significantly since the close of 1999 thanks to a series of strategic land reclamation projects. The Cotai Strip, a 6.1-square-kilometre stretch of this reclaimed land, stands out as the most ambitious and fruitful of these projects. It's connected the islands of Coloane and Taipa since 2005, with the merger evident in Cotai's blended name.

As the location of most of Macao's integrated resorts, Cotai went on to become Macao's economic



The Leal Senado with its lively atmosphere and historical significance (left) and Sé Church, a Baroque landmark that reflects the city's multicultural history and serves as a spiritual centrepiece in the vibrant parish of Sé



engine. That followed the government's decision to dissolve a longstanding gaming monopoly, leading to a proliferation of premier hospitality and entertainment venues in the city – accompanied by high-end dining and shopping options.

Macao's integrated resorts have positioned the city as a leading entertainment and tourism hub in Asia while creating substantial employment opportunities for its workforce. They have also been a boon for local businesses, many of which have found new opportunities as suppliers to the booming resort industry. As a result, the standard of living in Macao has soared over the past two decades.

Macao can now pride itself on a robust public healthcare system and comprehensive support for its vulnerable populations, including seniors. Residents benefit from 15 years of free education and have access to four public higher education institutions, along with several private ones. The government has been proactive when it comes to developing public housing, establishing premier sports and cultural facilities, and investing in a broad network of health centres.

Quality of life will continue to rise as Macao's economy diversifies. Formalised in a five-year plan unveiled in November 2023, the government's diversification strategy targets growth in four key sectors: 'big health', with a focus on traditional Chinese medicine; modern financial services; high technology; and the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) industry, including large-scale cultural and sporting events. These sectors are set to grow in prominence over the next three years.

Illustrating the city's national integration, the strategy fully aligns with the Central Government's 2020 five-year plan and its 2019 development plan for the GBA.

HERITAGE AT THE HEART

While Macao has made significant economic strides since its return to the motherland, a rich cultural heritage remains a cornerstone of the city's identity. Nestled within the heart of its old town are centuries-old, meticulously conserved buildings that showcase the SAR's distinctive blend of Chinese and Portuguese influences. From the iconic Ruins of St Paul's to the revered

A-Ma Temple, Macao's Historic Centre reflects the city's multicultural history, earning its place on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005 as its 31st designated site in China.

The government is dedicated to preserving these 22 architectural gems. They are at the core of Macao's burgeoning cultural tourism sector, along with Macanese cuisine (considered one of the world's first examples of culinary fusion) and a large number of other intangible heritage treasures.

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

As a Special Administrative Region of China, Macao is administered by its own people, with a high degree of autonomy. People who, at the same time, proudly demonstrate their love for the motherland.

Encouraged to actively contribute to China's ongoing economic, technological, and social progress, the people of Macao are helping shape the nation's trajectory. The fruits of this collaboration are increasingly evident as the SAR's reputation as a safe and vibrant place to live, work and study grows ever stronger. This is proof of society's dedication to tradition, progress and the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy. ●

MACAO SAR 25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

Macao's Economic Evolution: A New Era Begins

Since its 1999 return to the motherland, Macao has transformed itself into one of the most prosperous places in the world. But that doesn't mean the city is resting on its laurels. Leveraging unique advantages within the rapidly progressing GBA, the Special Administrative Region marks its 25th anniversary in the midst of an ambitious drive for economic diversification.



Text **Amanda Saxton**

A bright, bold new future lies ahead for the SAR as it moves into a new economic era

Macao is at an exciting point in its economic evolution. Over the past 25 years, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China has transformed itself into one of the most prosperous and economically stable territories in the world. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita surged by 334 percent between 1999 and 2023, official data shows. And according to *Global Finance's* 2024 wealth rankings, Macao has the highest GDP per capita of any territory bar Luxembourg when taking differences in living costs into account.

By the end of 2024, the International Monetary Fund expects the SAR's GDP to have grown by 13.9 percent year-on-year (that's three times more than its prediction for the global average). Add an extremely low unemployment rate, minimal inflation, zero external debt and strong fiscal reserves, and you have an economic success story underscoring the successful practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy. This has been in place since the Chinese government resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macao.

The city's progress is the result of many factors, including growth in the gaming and tourism industry, which the government was quick to liberalise in the early 2000s. With a new focus on economic diversification, this forward momentum looks set to continue as the SAR celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Tai Kin Ip, director of Macao's Economic and Technological Development Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials DSED), says diversification is crucial to Macao's ability to "sustain long-term growth".

He also notes that a key part of the SAR's diversification plan lies in "coordinated development" with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Promulgated in 2019, the GBA is a megalopolis of nine mainland cities and two SARs with a combined population of about 86 million. It aims to become a world-class bay area and innovation hub through leveraging each component's unique strengths. The GBA is often referred to as China's economic growth engine.



Tai Kin Ip, director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau

Macao may be the smallest city within the GBA, but it has something very valuable to offer: strong ties with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), collectively home to around 290 million people (about one-fifth of the global population). These include Portugal, a long-standing partner in Europe; Brazil, the largest economy in South America; Timor-Leste in Southeast Asia; and six nations across Africa.

In return, the SAR can leverage the GBA's massive population

and resources to develop its own sustainable, high-value sectors. Tai points to several ways this is already happening, such as a new cross-border scheme helping Macao start-ups get off the ground. Jointly established by the SAR government and Guangdong Province's nine municipal-level governments, the scheme consists of 23 innovation accelerators across the GBA that provide training, investor introductions, and useful advice to fledgling entrepreneurs from Macao.

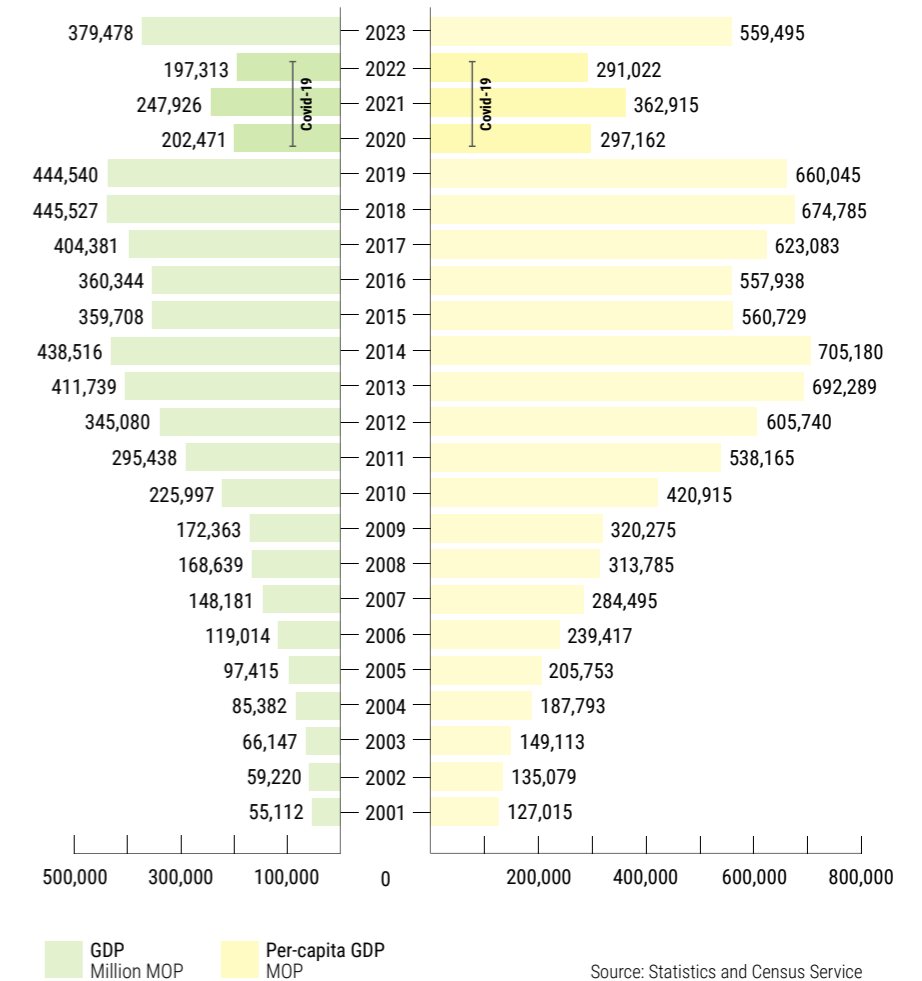
FOUR EMERGING INDUSTRIES FIND SPACE TO GROW

Macao's government unveiled its 2024-2028 Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification in October last year, building on the '1+4' model Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng first introduced in his 2023 Policy Address. In this model, the '1' refers to Macao's integrated tourism and leisure industry – which will remain its economic backbone. The '4' stands for four emerging industries, namely modern financial services; 'big health' with a focus on traditional Chinese medicine; high technologies; and meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (collectively called MICE), along with large-scale sporting and cultural events.

The plan's stated aim is to "gradually elevate" the amount of gross domestic product (GDP) contributed by non-gaming industries until they combine to make up about 60 percent of the total. In fact, this target was met in 2023.

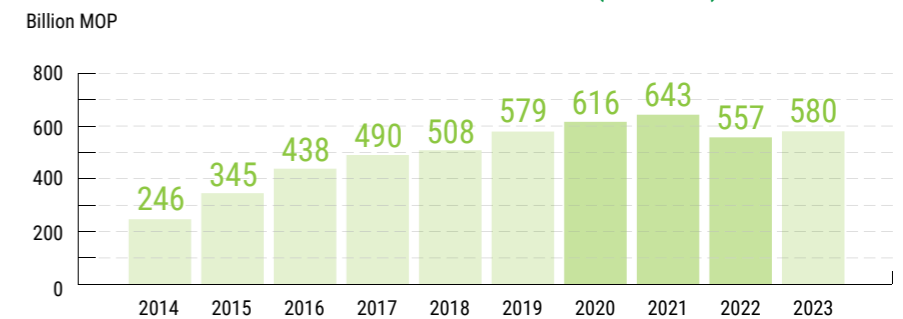
Tai says that "each key industry has distinct foundations, and all hold considerable potential". He points to the SAR's 10 higher education institutions and four State Key Laboratories as places where cutting-edge research into the likes of traditional Chinese medicine, the Internet of Things, electronics and even planetary sciences has been happening for some time.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Per-Capita GDP (2001-2023)



Source: Statistics and Census Service

Macao Government Financial Reserves (2014-2023)



Source: Statistics and Census Service



Xinhua News Agency

The Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was established to facilitate Macao's growth and economic diversification

(Opposite page, left) Carlos Cid Álvares, CEO of BNU

(Opposite page, right) The iconic Macau Grand Prix will soon be joined by more major sporting events

He also notes that the biggest opportunities for immediate growth lie just across the river, in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin – a major GBA initiative established in 2021 to facilitate the SAR's economic diversification. This 106-square-kilometre island is jointly administered by the SAR and Guangdong's respective governments.

As of September this year, 16,539 Macao residents lived in Hengqin while 5,132 worked there. A number of joint innovation hubs – the Guangdong-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Technology Industrial Park and the Guangdong-Macao Integrated Circuit Design Industrial Park, for example – are

currently thriving in the cooperation zone, as are several Macao university campuses. By the end of October 2024, 6,521 Macao-registered enterprises were registered in Hengqin.

According to Macao banker Carlos Cid Álvares, Hengqin is a “fundamental approach to solving Macao's limited space and exploring new development directions.” Álvares, the CEO of one of the SAR's two note-issuing banks, Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU), also hails the ‘1+4’ plan as “a great opportunity for Macao ... to strengthen its status and role in the nation's economic development and opening up to the world.”



António Sammarful

MODERN FINANCE FOR A NEW ERA

BNU is actively involved in growing one of Macao's four emerging industries, modern financial services. Álvares says the bank recently launched a cross-border wealth management service connecting Macao, the mainland and Hong Kong – an initiative he believes is testament to the three regions' ability to cooperate. Álvares notes that the very fact this type of cross-border service is possible “shows the Central Government's substantial support for the GBA.”

He adds that BNU also contributes to the yuan's internationalisation, a policy priority for China. Under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ policy, Macao has its own, open financial infrastructure – positioning it to “serve the needs of the country and support it in the implementation of its political strategies,” according to the diversification plan.

One way the government is helping grow Macao's modern finance sector is through further developing its bond market, particularly in regards to ‘dim sum bonds’ (offshore bonds issued in yuan), green bonds, and state and local government bonds. Macao also offers innovative financing channels for small and micro-sized enterprises in the mainland and is becoming a strategic hub for offshore yuan clearing. In addition, the government is expanding the city's role as a financial services platform between China and PSCs.

CITY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND MICE

The government is committed to increasing the number of large-scale events held in Macao. This means more performances, more art exhibitions and expanding the likes of the already well-established Macao Arts Festival and the Macao International Music Festival. But it also involves introducing more “branded sports events with Macao characteristics” to the city's calendar.

Again, a large number of long-standing events already serve as a foundation in the sporting arena. The most iconic being the Macau Grand Prix, established back in 1954. This world-renowned motor sporting fixture transforms much of the city into a race track each November, giving visitor numbers a major boost.



The Guangdong Macao Branded Products Fair is just one of the many MICE events on Macao's busy schedule

(Opposite page) IPIM President Vincent U



The vast majority of events held in the SAR relate to its highly respected MICE industry: the city boasts a staggering array of state-of-the-art conference centres, luxurious hotels and versatile exhibition spaces catering to a diverse range of corporate needs. A total of 1,160 MICE events took place in 2023 and the government wants that number to hit between 2,000 and 2,500 come 2028. The first half of 2024 saw 34 percent year-on-year growth in the sector.

MICE events relate to a broad range of industries, from tech innovation to travel to forestry. The SAR government also helps organise several major trade shows, including the Macao International Trade and

Investment Fair, the Macao Franchise Expo and the Guangdong-Macao Branded Products Fair. The MICE sector is very valuable to Macao; MICE visitors tend to spend more than double the amount leisure tourists do, and they boost the amount of business being done in the city.

A PLATFORM FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Speaking of which, Macao has been praised by the World Trade Organization as an easy place to do business. Its commercial environment aligns with international conventions and standards, and the same rules apply to both local and



Lei Heong Leong

foreign investors. In addition, the SAR – typically as ‘Macao, China’ – maintains trade and economic ties with over 100 territories worldwide, and is a member of over 50 international organisations.

With a free port, competitive tax rates and separate customs regime to the mainland, the SAR is able to actively promote itself as a favourable environment for large corporations that intend to expand their business internationally. Indeed, many international companies have bases in the city, and a large number of foreign chambers of commerce operate here. While a lot of these companies are focused internally, serving and supplying the luxury integrated resorts, others use Macao as a foothold to expand into the fast-growing GBA, and further into the mainland.

Macao's Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (known by its Portuguese initials IPIM) offers a number of services to local and foreign business investors. IPIM President Vincent U tells *Macao* magazine that the institute focusses on three main areas: outreach to GBA enterprises, attracting big-name MICE events to Macao and organising trade delegations to PSCs. He also says it aims to “attract more high-quality projects to Hengqin”.

U notes that IPIM “assisted” a total of 586 investment proposals between 2022 and June 2024, creating 2,199 new jobs in the process. He says that about 40 percent of the proposals related to Macao's four emerging industries. In the first half of this year alone, investments totalling 1.32 billion patacas “reflected investors’ confidence in Macao's business environment and development prospects,” he says.

DRIVING SINO-LUSOPHONE TRADE

IPIM is heavily involved in Sino-Lusophone relations. Earlier this year, its office and supporting office of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (better known as Forum Macao) merged in order to streamline their complementary operations. U told the magazine that one of the new body's first initiatives was to send a 40-strong delegation of entrepreneurs from Macao and Hengqin to Angola, resulting in 10 new contracts being signed. Areas of cooperation ranged from finance to environmental protection. Other delegations have travelled to Mozambique, Brazil, Timor-Leste and Portugal this year, their agendas spanning cross-border ecommerce, the biomedical sector, agriculture and supermarkets. Reciprocal delegations from these countries also visit Macao to explore opportunities in the SAR and GBA.

U can point to many other recent PSC-related initiatives, including the China-PSC Business Compass helping companies from PSCs get established

in both Macao and the mainland; November's Let's Hang Out-Lusophone and Macao Products Bazaar in Hengqin; and the Pavilion of China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform in the China-PSCs Complex (a massive exhibition space). The China-PSCs Complex hosted Forum Macao's 6th Ministerial Conference this past April.

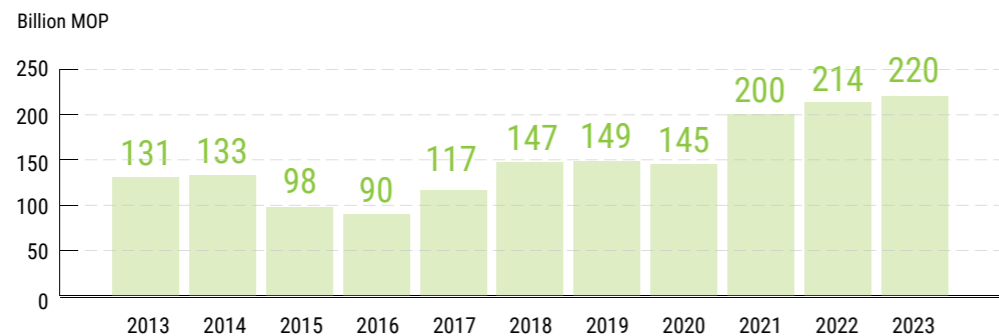
Since its 2003 establishment, Forum Macao has been connecting China with Portuguese-speaking markets around the world. The importance of this role is backed up by stats: Sino-Lusophone trade surged from US\$131.4 billion in 2013 to US\$174.2 billion in the first three quarters of 2024.

Earlier this year, Forum Macao Deputy Secretary-General Xie Ying told *Forum Bulletin* the platform's "role as a bridge will be even more valued and fruitful" as the SAR's economic diversification continues to accelerate. "The Portuguese-speaking countries can take advantage of Macao's platform to connect with the vast Chinese consumer market, deepen scientific and technological cooperation with China,



Forum Macao Deputy-Secretary General Xie Ying took up her post in April this year

Trade Between People's Republic of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries (2013-2023)



Source: Forum Macao

share the development opportunities in China, foster Sino-Lusophone cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and achieve complementary strengths," she explained.

Xie added that developments within the GBA, and especially in Hengqin, would "inject new impetus, provide new space, and create new opportunities" for all members of Forum Macao.

Indeed, her predictions could be said for the SAR in general. BNU's Álvares says he feel "optimistic regarding Macao's economic future", noting that in the '1+4' economic diversification strategy the SAR

had "successfully found the most appropriate path for its long-term development".

Tai, from the economic bureau, echoes the banker's sentiment, congratulating the government on its triumphs over the past 25 years - describing them as setting the stage for the next quarter century. With continuous support from the Central Government, Macao's leaders have capitalised on the city's unique advantages, improved living standards for all residents, and committed to integration initiatives that enable the SAR "to play an important role in assisting the country's comprehensive opening-up in the new era," he emphasised. ●

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH

FMCC's Rutger Verschuren

Dutch national Rutger Verschuren is the long-standing chairman of the France Macao Chamber of Commerce (FMCC). He has lived in Macao since 2010, and received the rank and title of Chevalier de L'Ordre National du Mérite (Knight of the National Order of Merit) from the French government in 2023 for his role in fostering cultural and economic relations between France and Macao.



Image courtesy of Artyzen Grand Lapa

Rutger Verschuren, who is the area vice president for Artyzen Hospitality Group, spoke with *Macao* magazine about the business environment in Macao for foreign companies – many of which are involved with the FMCC.

How do you view Macao's economic progress over the past quarter century?

Macao is a major success story. I have seen the city evolve from an almost purely gaming environment to a much more diverse and well-connected region. We have opened up to the world a lot more. But the biggest change, I believe, is what will come over the next five years. The development of Hengqin and Macao's further integration with the mainland.

Can you give us an idea of what foreign companies are operating in Macao?

Macao became a sort of a magnet after its return to the motherland. We saw companies from France, Japan, a lot from Portugal, Australia, the UK, the US and so forth coming here. When there is a region with growth, a lot of industries are keen to dive in.

In terms of French brands, it's not just luxury goods, but also wines and food such as cheese, cognac and other liquors. Some watch brands, too, bags, accessories and clothing. Macao's water treatment is handled by a French company – SUEZ – in partnership with the government (SUEZ provides the technology).

What attracts them here?

In the early 2000s, with Cotai's development and the arrival of integrated resorts, it felt like Macao became a gaming hub overnight. So, all the accessory businesses – the connective businesses – flowed in. First, food and beverage. Then shopping and also technologies. As the city was growing in population, other services were needed and there was even more scope for growth.

Now, you have a high gross domestic product per capita, which is attractive for people bringing in consumer goods. Economically, the city is very stable. It's a very safe place to live. English is widely spoken. And there's great connectivity via the international airport, the bridge to Hong Kong and many ways to connect to the mainland. Macao also has an international feel to it, which is quite welcoming.

Is the '1+4' economic diversification strategy a drawcard, too?

For sure. Macao is very serious about diversification, so any company that fits in with this diversification programme has quite a reasonable chance to succeed at getting established here. The four emerging industries are modern finance, big health with an emphasis on traditional Chinese medicines, high technology and MICE with cultural and sporting events.

All attract foreign investors and companies who want to see what they can do to contribute to Macao prosperity. And to see how they can prosper themselves from leaning on Macao's success.

Tell us about Macao's role as a springboard into the mainland.

Recently we have seen there is a clear trend that China is opening its borders to international visitors and companies. Macao has a very strong reputation as a springboard into the mainland, via Hengqin and the GBA. This is even more true today than it was in the past – especially for companies from Portuguese-speaking countries.

I must say that the Central Government is really giving an enormous positive push to all of this. The GBA has a clear plan for each of its cities and regions, for the greater good of the area. And the interconnection between the different cities is developing extremely well with new bridges left and right, new highways, railways, and so on. We are not a small, isolated region anymore. ●

How Macao's Multicultural Legacy Lives On

Macao is home to the world's first fusion cuisine, unique Sino-European architecture and a host of living traditions that reflect its centuries as China's gateway to the world. It's this "fantastic identity of inclusiveness and hybridism" that's securing a bright future within the Guandong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, according to renowned local architect Carlos Marreiros.



A 17th-century fort looks out from the dense green of Guia Hill to the busy, modern city below

(Opposite page) Carlos Marreiros outside his office at Albergue SCM



Lei Heong leong

Text **Amanda Saxton**

There's a microcosm of Macao in the heart of its historic St Lazarus district. Albergue da Santa Casa da Misericórdia (SCM), a beautifully cobblestoned courtyard that's hemmed by ochre European-style buildings more than a century old. At first glance, you could be forgiven for believing you were in Lisbon, Portugal; clearly the inspiration for this picturesque compound. But closer inspection reveals that it's camphor trees providing shade, a species indigenous to East Asia. And subtle architectural quirks bely a strong Chinese influence.

Take the buildings' downspouts. They were made to resemble bamboo stems, a design you would never see in

Europe. And instead of using limestone for decorative pilasters, cornices and doorframes, Albergue SCM's builders deployed local sandstone and plaster. Their choices reflected resources available at the time.

Local architect and artist Carlos Marreiros explains that while much of the city's urban landscape was built based on European ideas, plans were brought to life by Chinese craftsmen using local materials. "Something harmonious came up from this mixture: sometimes brilliant, sometimes bizarre, but it's an architectural vernacular that truly reflects Macao's heritage," Marreiros says. His office is located within Albergue SCM, which also boasts art galleries, an artisan tea shop and a Portuguese restaurant: the compound is one of Macao's top destinations for culture lovers.



Lei Heong Ieong

A-Ma Temple remains a living part of the city, welcoming worshippers and tourists alike

(Opposite page) The imposing frontispiece now known as the Ruins of St Paul's has become an icon of Macao

Culture – its origin, preservation and economic potential – is a subject close to the award-winning architect's heart. Not only is Marreiros Macanese, he's been involved in drafting legislation to protect the city's cultural heritage since the 1980s, back when Macao was still administered by the Portuguese.

According to Marreiros, it wasn't until Macao's return to the motherland that its preservation laws started being taken seriously. "I am in the position to say that Macao's heritage has never been so well protected as it is now," he tells this magazine. "What the Portuguese did was quite good, but there wasn't enough money. And those who wanted to preserve old architecture could also be labelled anti-progress, or

anti-development, which didn't help the cause either."

In comparison, both the central and Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s governments have fully embraced the true value of Macao's East-meets-West identity. Marreiros remembers feeling very glad when the Central Government enshrined the protection of cultural heritage in Macao's Basic Law (the legal document serving as the SAR's 'constitution', which came into effect on the same date as the city's return to the motherland). And he watched with approval as the new SAR government met requirement after requirement to get the city's historic centre inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

UNESCO RECOGNITION

That years-long process came to fruition in 2005. Now, 22 sites within Macao's old town have been recognised for what UNESCO describes as their 'outstanding universal value'. To achieve this lofty designation, the SAR government demonstrated comprehensive plans for safeguarding each site for future generations.

According to UNESCO, Macao's historic centre "bears witness to the first and most enduring encounter between China and the West, based on the vibrancy of international trade." Courtesy of Portuguese navigators, the foundation was laid for the cosmopolitan city Macao was to become. Indeed, the next several centuries saw flows of traders and travellers from within the mainland and across Asia – as well from Europe, the Middle East and the Americas – pass through Macao, some settling here permanently. The city has retained this multicultural spirit to this day.

HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE, VERY MUCH STILL ALIVE

It is worth noting that parts of the oldest building on UNESCO's list, the A-Ma Temple, pre-date the Portuguese's arrival. Originally built by Chinese fishermen to honour the sea goddess Mazu, these days the seaside complex is a-bustle with prayerful locals and curious tourists. Most if not all of Macao's UNESCO-inscribed sites are similarly "alive" today, says Marreiros.



Xinhua News Agency

The temples and churches are active places of worship, where incense is offered to Taoist and Buddhist deities and Catholics line up for Holy communion. The neoclassical Leal Senado building, meanwhile retains much the same function it has since 1784. Back then it was the seat of Macao's Portuguese administrators; today it houses the SAR's Municipal Affairs Bureau. Guia Lighthouse, the first modern lighthouse in East Asia, has been shining its beacon since 1865.

Sites not being used for their original purpose have evolved with the times. A 17th-century church that fell prey to a fire in 1835 is no longer being used for services, but its surviving frontispiece has become one of Macao's most recognisable tourist attractions: the Ruins of St Paul's. It's also an important archeological site.

A regularly updated list of Classified Immovable Properties is another way the government protects Macao's heritage. One-hundred-and-sixty-five monuments, buildings and sites are currently on the list, including the Camões Grotto, where the renowned Portuguese poet Luís de Camões is believed to have finished his epic masterpiece, *Os Lusíadas*, in the mid-16th century.

It also boasts a home owned by Dr Sun Yat-sen, known as a pioneer of revolutions in modern China. The Sun Yat Sen Memorial House is now a museum to the great man, who worked as a doctor in Macao in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Camões and Sun Yat-sen are just two highly-recognisable names whose legacies help illustrate the city's position as a cultural crossroads. As Marreiros explains it, there's "a strong, magical energy in this place" that attracts poets, artists and thinkers from different corners of the world, each adding their own flavour to the melting pot that is Macao.



FROM DRUNKEN DRAGONS TO THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

Of course, Macao's multifaceted identity is evident in realms beyond architecture. The government also maintains a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the living traditions that merge the city's past and present. Cantonese Opera and Herbal Tea Brewing firmly embed Macao within southern China, while the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord the God Jesus takes place in Christian communities

the world over. This annual march traces 'stations of the cross' through the city, with each station representing a key event from the day Jesus was crucified.

Many of the intangible items are entirely unique to Macao. The Festival of the Drunken Dragon, for example, has been celebrated by the region's fishmongers for centuries; highly expressive Patuá Theatre is performed in the Macanese creole, *patuá*. The most celebrated manifestation of Macao's multiculturalism is, however, Macanese Gastronomy.

Heritage in Macao means everything from memorialising Chinese revolutionaries (top), to celebrating with 'drunken dragons' (right) to finding peace in a poet's garden (bottom)



Image courtesy of Hotel Central

Macao is a paradise for foodies, from its world-first fusion cuisine to Michelin-star restaurants to a new festival bringing together top-tier gastronomy from around the world

(Opposite page) The city also draws in creative talents with acts ranging from Chinese pianist Lang Lang (pictured) to K-pop groups and US retro-soul star Bruno Mars

'A PARADISE OF GASTRONOMY'

Macao's Cultural Affairs Bureau describes the local cuisine as an "important historical by-product of Portugal's sailing culture." And indeed, its story starts in the European Age of Discovery. Portuguese navigators venturing towards the Far East sailed down the Western coast of Africa, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in Macao via South and Southeast Asia. The seamen's lengthy voyages saw their European eating habits adapt to local ingredients and techniques – which all came together in Macao's kitchens.

You can taste this culinary amalgamation in a dish like *galinha à Africana* (African chicken): heavy on *piri piri* chilli peppers from Mozambique, yet prepared in a way you won't find anywhere else in the world. The minced meat and potatoes dish *minchi* gets its warmth from cloves picked up by the Portuguese in Indonesia, and an umami depth from Chinese soy sauce.

UNESCO recognised Macao as a Creative City of Gastronomy in 2017, describing Macanese cuisine as the "first 'fusion food.'" The SAR's government has lent into this status by publishing an online repository of recipes, cook books and culinary manuscripts relating to Macanese gastronomy, and organising a number of food-focused events. These include the annual Macau Food Festival and this year's inaugural International Cities of Gastronomy Fest.

Macao's dining scene is a magnet for foodies from all over the world, who come not only to sample Macanese dishes but enjoy the full spectrum of exquisite international cuisine on offer. As Marreiros says, over the past 20 years the SAR has transformed itself into 'a paradise of gastronomy' that currently boasts 16 Michelin starred restaurants and 10 Bib Gourmand award winners across its tiny landmass. You can indulge in expertly executed sushi, contemporary French fare or regional specialities from across China – often within the same integrated resort.

THE RISE OF CULTURAL TOURISM

While Macao is immensely proud of its own deep-rooted heritage, the city's cultural vibrancy is also evidenced by the many world-class contemporary arts festivals held here every year. The Macao International Music Festival and the Macao Arts Festival both draw global talent and audiences. To illustrate, 2024's line-ups included US jazz legend Herbie Hancock, Russia's highly esteemed Mariinsky Orchestra and British choreographer Akram Khan's dance-theatre take on *The Jungle Book*. But they are the tip of the iceberg.

As the SAR government works to position Macao as a 'City of Performing Arts' – a stated goal in its 2024 policy address – more concerts, parades and large-scale creative projects can be expected. The city's integrated resorts are already making this a reality through hosting K-pop and Canto-pop sensations, Hong Kong rock bands and even US funk superstar Bruno Mars at their impressive venues.

These types of events are exciting for locals. But they're also an increasingly important drawcard for tourists from around the region, adding to Macao's rich seam of cultural attractions. And this is where the SAR's future lies, according to Marreiros. The architect sees cultural tourism as a vital point of difference as Macao integrates further into the Guandong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

"The GBA is something very strong, and it will definitely provide a very bright future for this area of China," Marreiros says, adding that each component contributes something to the megalopolis.

One thing Macao has – and adds – its long, long history of multiculturalism. Of being open to new ideas, ways of life and innovation. "Our fantastic identity of inclusiveness and hybridism has been going for over 450 years," Marreiros notes. "And, with the Central Government's full support, this is what will give us an even better future." ●



Image courtesy of The Londoner Macao

TOURISM Q&A WITH

MGTO's Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes

Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) since 2012, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, reflects on how far tourism has come in the past 25 years and on where it's headed next.



Macaulink

How would you describe Macao's tourism identity?

Macao's unique tourism identity is its more than 400 years of East-meets-West historical heritage, standing side by side with state-of-the-art integrated resorts. Along with a strong calendar of festivities and events, a diverse gastronomy and more.

What are the major milestones the industry has marked over the past 25 years?

Firstly, the gaming industry liberalisation that commenced in 2001. That led to the opening of multiple world-class tourism complexes with hotel, entertainment, MICE events, shopping, dining and other facilities [including gaming] all under the same roof.

In 2003, the Central Government launched its Facilitated Individual Travel (FIT) Scheme to support the development of the tourism industry in the Macao and Hong Kong Special Administrative Regions. This saw a boom in visitor arrivals from the mainland. The scheme now covers 59 mainland cities.

In 2005, the Historic Centre of Macao was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, making it the 31st designated World Heritage Site in China. Then, in 2017, Macao was designated a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Both designations strongly endorse the city's singular cultural heritage, providing two major "tourism calling cards" to Macao.

More recently, in 2022, the government granted new concession contracts to the six gaming operators in the city – requiring them to invest in iconic [cultural] projects, develop non-gaming sectors and to explore overseas markets, further solidifying Macao as a diverse and quality tourism destination.

Using figures, can you illustrate how tourism has grown since Macao's return to the motherland?

Here are a few figures to put things in perspective, comparing 1999 with the pre-pandemic tourism peak of 2019. In total, Macao welcomed 7.4 million visitors in 1999, and 39.4 million in 2019. Visitors from the mainland increased from 1.65 million to 27.9 million during that time. South Korea is one of the Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s top international visitor source markets and, in 2014, was our first foreign market to surpass half a million visitors. Macao welcomed 33,000 South Koreans in 1999 and over 743,000 in 2019.

How important is cultural tourism in Macao?

Multicultural heritage is an important part of Macao and a major asset as a tourism city. MGTO thinks of it as a "golden calling card". Our UNESCO heritage sites and status as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, along with Macao's intangible heritage, are key elements of the city's appeal as a tourism destination.

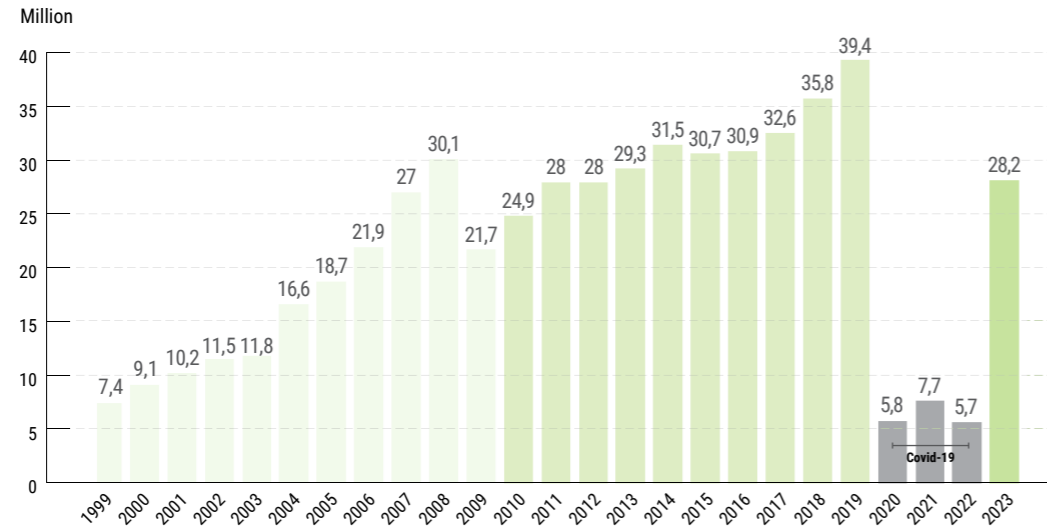
According to MGTO's 2023 Travel Behaviour Research Survey, respondents' favourite things about Macao were: number one, excellent and diversified food and restaurants; number two, promotional travel offers; number three, UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

What are some new directions the industry's taken in recent years?

In recent years, we have had more focus on increasing the number of international tourists visiting Macao. We've also introduced the concept of "tourism +" to enhance synergies between tourism and related sectors. Think "tourism + conventions and exhibitions", "tourism + culture", "tourism + sports" and more. Then, we are encouraging visitors to explore off-the-beaten-track parts of the city.

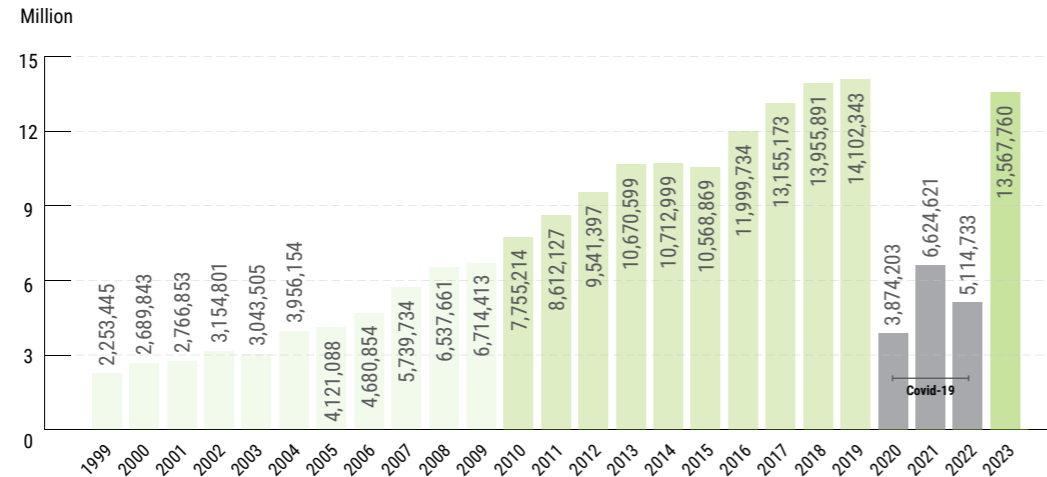
Visitor Arrivals Between 1999-2023

Source: Statistics and Census Service



Guests of Hotel Establishments Between 1999-2023

Source: Statistics and Census Service



Let’s talk about those in turn. Macao’s welcoming more foreign visitors?

Since fully reopening to international travel at the beginning of 2023, the emphasis has been on boosting visitor flows from overseas markets – especially those from Southeast and Northeast Asian countries with direct flights to the city. That’s while continuing to solidify Macao’s top visitor source market, namely Greater China. Attracting more international visitors is at the core of Macao’s development as a ‘World Centre of Tourism and Leisure.’

Next year, in 2025, MGTO plans to intensify efforts to expand its reach into medium-to-long-haul markets, such as India, the Middle East, Europe, and other regions.

Tell us about “tourism +”.

“Tourism +” is a way to attract a greater variety of visitors, encourage tourism consumption across the whole city and create more opportunities for tourism-related sectors – especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

“Tourism + sports” is one of the avenues Macao is exploring to diversify its offerings. The city is moving towards staging more sports events, with the upcoming co-hosting of the 15th National Games in 2025 (with Guangdong and Hong Kong) set to generate great momentum in such endeavours.

To its great advantage in this field, Macao already has the iconic Macau Grand Prix. For seven decades, the Grand Prix has been a great example of the power of the dynamic between sports and tourism in terms of attracting visitors, promoting the city, and generating a wide array of other related events and activities. The Macau Grand Prix Museum, under MGTO, is a great example; it blends history, sports, technology, culture and creativity.

What’s behind the push for tourists to explore less-trodden parts of the city?

Encouraging visitors to explore more off-the-beaten-track areas is one of MGTO’s priorities. This focus on developing community tourism serves two main purposes: on one hand, to encourage a more in-depth travel experience in the city; on the other hand, to drive more visitor flows to the different districts of Macao – boosting consumption in local economies and benefiting merchants and other small businesses in these areas.

How does Macao’s increasing integration with the mainland impact its tourism industry?

The GBA, including the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, continues to have a huge impact on tourism in the region – opening up new opportunities for the local tourism industry.

Cross-border transportation infrastructures like the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the forthcoming Light Rail Transit Link to Hengqin make it easier to travel within the GBA. So do new travel facilitation measures. For example, one



Lei Heong Leong

The Macau Grand Prix Museum

of these enables mainland Chinese visitors to make multiple trips between Hengqin and Macao over a seven-day period, thanks to a special endorsement to their visas.

Together with tourism counterparts in the region, MGTO is also working to raise the profile of multi-destination tourism within the GBA for mainlanders and foreign visitors.

How does MGTO manage sustainable tourism growth?

The management of sustainable tourism growth is work that involves the whole city and is being conducted on multiple fronts, given that tourism is a main pillar of Macao’s economy. In accordance with Macao’s Tourism Industry Development Master Plan, we have a number of action plans ranging from encouraging hotels and tourism-related industries to adopt international green building standards, waste management and recycling protocol, to optimising pedestrian environments. We use the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations to assess our progress. ●

In the Laboratory and Beyond

Tradition meets innovation in Macao, where universities, state laboratories and health providers are working together to bring the wonders of Chinese medicine to the world.



Text **Claire Drake**

Advancements in health and education sectors tend to be symbiotic. An improving academic landscape nurtures research in the health sciences, while more medical facilities increase opportunities for applied scholarly analysis, scientific breakthroughs and better public health. This has been the case in Macao, where both sectors have been flourishing since the city's return to the motherland.

Their interplay is increasingly apparent in the field of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). While Macao's traditional pharmacies

– their shelves laden with dried herbs, roots and berries – have ministered to locals for centuries, recent years have seen TCM start to play a starring role in the city's push for economic diversification. The fit seems perfect. These time-honoured medicines, ingrained in Macao's rich heritage, are starting to attract more global attention. And a growing interest in holistic, natural therapies creates new opportunities for medical tourism in the city – adding an additional layer to what Macao already has to offer in this field.



PROGRESS AND RECOGNITION

According to Dr Zhou Hua, a pharmacology professor at Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) and the Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Macao's emerging TCM industry "started from the founding of TCM education in the city in the year 2000." That's when both MUST and its Faculty of Chinese Medicine were established. Eleven years later, in 2021, Zhou told *Macao* that "tremendous changes" in the TCM industry over the next decade would "contribute significantly to the diversification of Macao."

The change he was most anticipating – regulatory reform – materialised in 2022, thanks to the establishment of Macao's Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials ISAF). That same year saw the enactment of a new law regulating pharmaceutical activities in the TCM field and officialising the process for registering new TCM products.

Previously, a department operating under the Health Bureau was in charge of supervising all pharmaceutical activities in Macao. But given the so-called 'big health' industry's massive growth potential and the vast scope of tasks its regulatory body would need to perform, the SAR government decided that a whole new bureau would best



Dr Zhou Hua

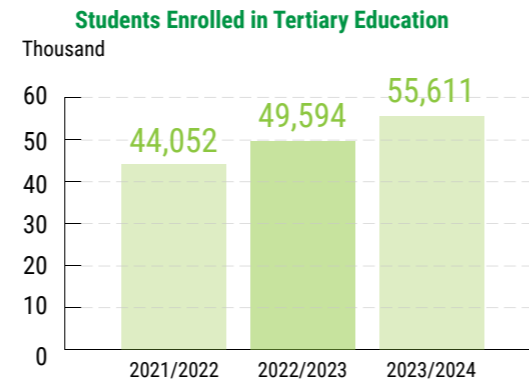
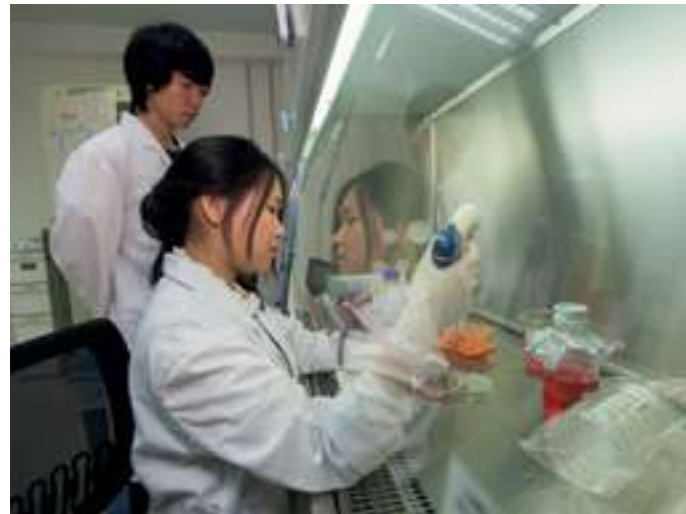
(Opposite page) Macau University of Science and Technology

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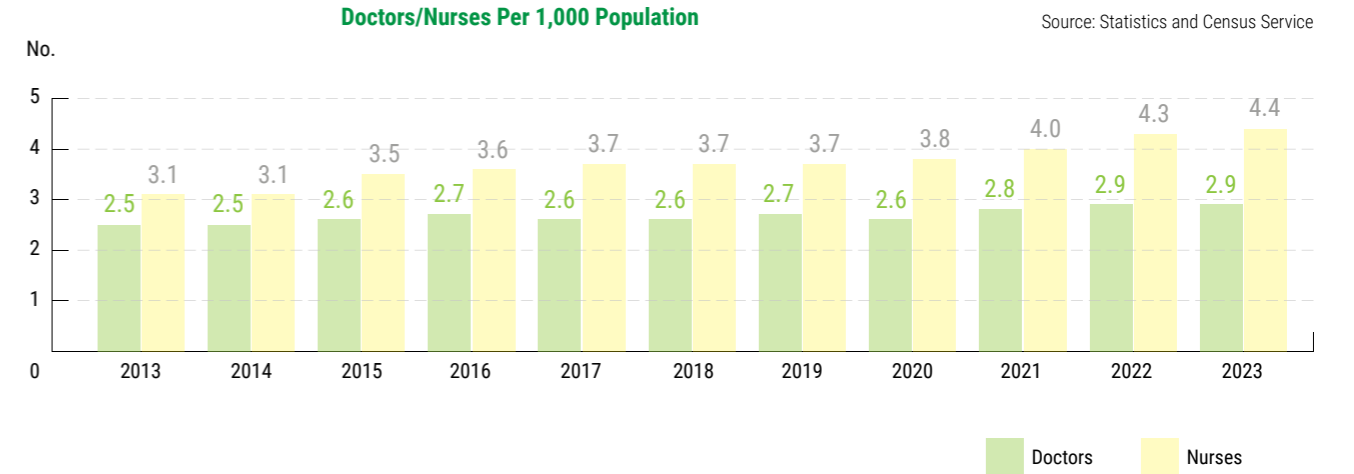
serve rapid development. The term 'big health' reflects a more holistic take on healthcare than tends to be practised in the West.

The ISAF's launch marked a new era in Macao's health sector, and is already bearing fruit. A number of TCM products made by Macao companies have since been authorised for use in the mainland, as well as in several Portuguese-speaking countries. This not only demonstrates TCM's increasing role in mainstream global healthcare, but Macao's position at the frontier: the SAR is leaning into its historic and cultural connections with the Lusophone world to open up new markets for TCM products, fully in accordance with national objectives.

China has been pushing for TCM's internationalisation for decades, while its people have been benefiting from therapeutic herbal infusions, acupuncture and cupping for thousands of years. A major breakthrough came in 2019, when the World Health Organization (WHO) included TCM in its official compendium of diseases and diagnostic tools for the first time. Having acknowledged TCM as "one of the popularly applied health resources across the globe," the WHO recently began developing a standardisation system for TCM training and practice. As a Collaborating Center for Traditional Medicine appointed by the WHO, Macao provides training to thousands of health professionals from all over the world.



Source: Statistics and Census Service



State Key Laboratory at University of Macau

WHERE IT'S ALL HAPPENING

Two very important TCM facilities for Macao are the Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park of Cooperation Between Guangdong and Macao (known as GMTCM Park) and the State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, where Zhou works. GMTCM Park, a joint-venture between Macao and Guangdong's governments, is located across 500,000 square metres in Hengqin – part of China's Guangdong province – and opened in 2021.

It's a collaborative hub for TCM research, innovation, and manufacturing that's now home to hundreds of companies, most from the mainland but many from Macao (there were 86 local TCM firms based in the park in October 2024). These Macao-registered companies receive subsidies of up to US\$2.7 million for each medicinal or

TCM-related food product they're producing in Hengqin. As such, the GMTCM simultaneously promotes Macao's national integration while providing the SAR's own burgeoning TCM industry with the resources it needs to grow.

The State Key Laboratory is jointly run by the University of Macau (UM) and MUST, with locations on both campuses. The lab fosters collaboration between academia, hospitals and industry stakeholders, and has assisted in a great many clinical trials and breakthroughs since its 2011 establishment. Ginseng, a plant widely used in Chinese medicines, has been at the heart of a number of its discoveries – ranging from the fragrant root's potential in shrinking lung cancer tumours to the potent antifungal properties of its leaves.

Between 2015 and mid-2024, the State Key Laboratory also saw more than 50 patents granted by the United States Patent and Trademark Office. These included treatments

like neferine, which is extracted from the embryo of a lotus seed, for Huntington disease, and the use of tangeretin, a flavone found in citrus peels, to treat cancer.

Another major step forward for the SAR's TCM sector occurred in 2022, when UM established its Macao Centre for Testing of Chinese Medicine (MCTCM). Leveraging research conducted by the State Key Laboratory, the centre provides technical support to ISAF and will eventually conduct efficacy testing on Macao-made TCM products (trial operations launched earlier this year).

To support Macao's health industry, most of the city's comprehensive universities teach health science degrees. However, MUST is the only one with bachelor, master and PhD-level programmes in traditional medicine. MUST is also the city's only university training medical doctors. Its new, six-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme

launched in 2019; Macao's first home-grown physicians will graduate next year.

Meanwhile, three of the SAR's higher education institutions boast nursing programmes: MUST, Macao Polytechnic University and Kiang Wu Nursing College.



THE NEXT BIG THING: MEDICAL TOURISM

Macao is positioning itself as a future hub for medical tourism with a strong focus on TCM-related offerings. With holistic healing at their core and a deep-rooted cultural authenticity, traditional medicines lend themselves to health and wellness-style retreats where participants not only aim to treat specific ailments but promote their overall well-being.

According to Macao's 2024-2028 Five-Year Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification, the brand new Macao Union Hospital will spearhead this TCM-tourism drive – offering “products [and services] with unique and personalised characteristics [to] high-net-worth visitors”. The Cotai-located hospital opened its doors to local and overseas patients in September. The SAR's integrated resorts, meanwhile, are being encouraged to develop “big health tourism products” that combine holistic Chinese medicines

with beauty treatments and other therapies in spa-like settings.

As well as opening Macao up to a future of world-class medical tourism, the Macao Union Hospitals state-of-the-art facilities are major boons for local residents seeking medical care. The main complex also added around 800 additional hospital beds to the city's stocks, while its 300-bed rehabilitation facility is set to open in 2026. The hospital is another feather in the cap for Macao-mainland cooperation: the facility is being co-managed by the Peking Union Medical College Hospital in Beijing, and it will be classified as a State-level Regional Medical Centre in the GBA.

IN PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

As Macao emerges as a destination for health and wellness travellers, another of the city's top universities is taking note. Macao University of Tourism (known by its Portuguese initials UTM) president Fanny

(Opposite page) Macao University of Tourism President Fanny Vong

Macao Union Hospital, seen from above



Cheong Chi Fong



Xinhua News Agency

Macao Institute for Tourism Studies since its 1995 establishment, officials decided that university-status better reflected the quality of instruction on offer.

The SAR's higher education landscape has been growing at pace since its return to the motherland. UTM's upgrade followed the former Macao Polytechnic Institute's in 2022; the latter is now known as the Macao Polytechnic University. As it stands, there are 10 tertiary institutions in Macao – four public and six private institutions. And the institutions themselves are expanding. New campuses are being built in neighbouring Hengqin, while an ever-increasing range of top quality programmes are being added to universities' curricula. UTM, for example, recently added new qualifications in artificial intelligence (AI) and coastal management.

'A LOT OF NEW ENERGY'

According to Vong, this growth is enhancing the city's reputation as a premier education hub. She sees Macao's student body further diversifying, while more international faculty members take up positions at the SAR's universities. What is happening is known as the 'Matthew effect': when progress breeds progress, and success breeds success.

“We've seen amazing, even phenomenal changes [since Macao's return to China],” says Vong. “The city has become more vibrant: there's a lot of new energy going on, new opportunities, new projects, new experiences for tourists. Another positive is that the city has become more welcoming.”

Indeed, as Macao invests in cutting-edge educational institutions and holistic healthcare facilities, the local community, broader region and world reap the benefits. A focus on TCM – from creating novel, high-quality products that get patented overseas, to building wellness retreats for body and soul – plays an important role in this transformation. And TCM is just one example of Macao's unique ability to make its mark on the global stage. ●

Vong told *Macao* magazine that she was eager to diversify the range of programmes UTM offers to better meet the city's so-called “tourism +” strategy – which encompasses health and wellness. “Tourism +” is a government initiative aimed at integrating the existing hospitality industry with emerging sectors.

“I think that these are all major areas where tourism can serve as a foundation on which to build up a multi-skilled talent force,” Vong says. “So, our students will be versatile enough in their main field, tourism and hospitality, to jump over into other sectors and spur the growth of those sectors.”

In 2024, the highly-influential QS World University Rankings rated UTM as the 12th best place in the world to study hospitality and leisure management, and the second best place to do it in Asia. In fact, its prestigious international reputation earned UTM a name change this year. Known as the

Building a Better Future

Since its return to the motherland in 1999, Macao's population, visitor numbers and even landmass have experienced extraordinary growth. But the city's infrastructure has kept pace, enhancing residents' quality of life with each new milestone reached.

This year saw the completion of the fourth Macao-Taipa crossing, known simply as Macao Bridge



Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Cheong Chi Fong**

Over the past 25 years, Macao's government has placed the utmost importance on developing the city's infrastructure. This should hardly come as a surprise given that the city has been growing rapidly since its return to the motherland in 1999. Not only has its population surged by 60 percent, but land reclamation efforts have expanded Macao's landmass by more than a third. While Macao's population remains relatively small – just 687,000 people – it is one of the most densely populated places in the world. And residents aren't the only people the city's authorities have to accommodate. Macao is a major tourist hub, welcoming over 39 million visitors at the industry's peak in 2019 (an astronomical increase compared to the 7.4 million visitors who arrived before 2000).

Macao's new leaders predicted this rapid momentum; it was their plan for the city from the start. That's why they established the Office for Infrastructure Development (known by its Portuguese initials GDI) right off the bat, in 2000, to coordinate the

maintenance, modernisation and development of the new Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s many construction projects.

One of the office's early achievements was Sai Van Lake Plaza, which has hosted numerous events and festivities since opening in 2001. Another noteworthy project was a new checkpoint building at the Border Gate – Macao's main entry point to Guangdong Province and by far its busiest border crossing. The 2.2-kilometre Sai Van Bridge (the third Macao-Taipa bridge), opened to the public in 2005, connecting the peninsula's southwestern end with the northwestern tip of Taipa for the first time.

In the years since, Macao's infrastructure has continued to develop at an impressive rate. Opening the fourth Macao-Taipa bridge was this year's highlight: the 3.1-kilometre, eight-lane Macao Bridge is the easternmost of four bridges that connect the Macao Peninsula to Taipa. Its name was chosen by local residents.



“The Master Plan takes into consideration the overall interests of the city and of its citizens.”

– Nuno Soares

Macaolink

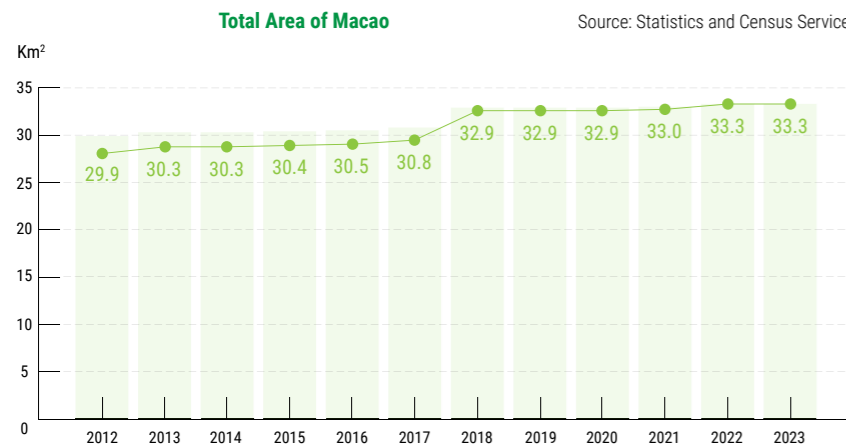
Nuno Soares, head of the Department of Architecture and Design at the University of Saint Joseph

(Opposite page) The ever-expanding Light Rail Transit system allows Macao to grow its population without the gridlock

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

In 2022, the government launched an Urban Development Master Plan that laid out Macao’s infrastructural trajectory through 2040.

The blueprint divides Macao into residential, commercial, recreational and touristic zones, setting aside 18 percent of its land for nature and



conservation. Almost a quarter of the city is reserved for government infrastructure.

Nuno Soares, head of architecture and design department at the University of Saint Joseph, describes the Master Plan as an important step forward for Macao: “It takes into consideration the overall interests of the city and of its citizens,” he says. Soares adds that the plan’s comprehensive scope and detail reveal impressive coordination between almost all of the SAR’s governmental departments.

Key departments involved include the relatively newly established Public Works Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials DSOP), which superseded the GDI in 2022, the Land and Urban Construction Bureau, the Transport Bureau, the Environmental Protection Bureau and the Housing Bureau among others.

ECO-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION

Like any other fast-developing city, Macao has experienced traffic congestion. This challenge is complicated by a hilly topography and many narrow, cobblestone lanes (built back when foot traffic and rickshaws were the norm).

As such, the SAR government has made public transportation a priority. In his 2003 policy address, then Chief Executive Edmund Ho announced plans were afoot for a new mass transit system “to tackle the root of the transportation problem”. These plans have materialised into an exceptionally well-developed network of bus routes that reach every corner of the city, and the ongoing development of Macao’s first ever railway, the Light Rapid Transit (LRT).

The LRT is a game changer for residents as it’s immune to the pressure

points of rush-hour traffic. Its backbone, the Taipa Line, opened to much fanfare in December 2019. The now 12.5-kilometre route travels from Barra, on the peninsula, through the main residential communities of Taipa and into the historic Taipa Village, then past Cotai’s bustling strip of integrated resorts and the international airport to terminate at the Taipa Ferry Terminal. The Barra section opened last year, running the length of the Sai Van Bridge via a purpose-built lower level.

More lines are currently under construction. The ambitious East Line will terminate at the Border Gate, in the city’s far north, enabling visitors and residents to travel all the way from the mainland border to Taipa and Cotai by train. Shorter but no less ambitious, the soon-to-open Hengqin Line takes an underwater tunnel from Taipa into the mainland island of Hengqin. Opening the Hengqin Line will be a major milestone for Macao’s national integration, particularly in the context of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Macao’s government is committed to making public transport as environmentally sound as possible. The LRT runs on electricity, meaning minimal carbon emissions, and most of Macao’s buses are also now electric. In recent years, a dramatic increase in the number of ‘green’ buses operating in the city has had a major impact on Macao’s overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Electrifying public transport is just one part of Macao’s long-term carbon reduction strategy, which aims to have the city reach ‘peak carbon’ before 2030 and achieve near-zero emissions by 2050.



Markus Mainka



Reclaimed land offers the space needed for the SAR Government to meet residents' housing needs through a series of ambitious public housing projects

(Opposite page) Jingbo Huang, director of the United Nations University Institute

HOUSING THE NEXT GENERATION

When it comes to housing, having a place to live “in peace and contentment” is the government’s stated aim for Macao residents. Due to the city’s small footprint, increasing the supply of public housing has involved a series of ambitious land reclamation projects known as the Macao New Urban Zone. Of the five separate reclamation projects within the zone – which combine to 350 hectares – Zone A is by far the largest. It’s an island located off the northeastern flank of Macao Peninsula, tucked between the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (known as HZMB).

Development there is well underway already, with Zone A’s first building – a nine-storey municipal complex – reaching completion in October 2023. A new road across the island opened mid-2024, guiding traffic headed to and from the HZMB, and construction of a nine-storey sports complex is expected to

get off the ground early next year. A senior care home, schools, a health centre and other community facilities will be built to serve the 96,000 people who are eventually expected to live there.

Much of Zone A has been earmarked for residential developments, equating to around 32,000 flats in total. Twenty-eight-thousand of those will be public housing units. According to the government’s 2023 Policy Address, there were almost 48,000 public housing units in Macao as of 2022. Over 40,000 more – including Zone A’s – are being planned for the medium-long-term future. DSOP Director Lam Wai Hou said in an earlier interview by the Chinese edition of *Macao* magazine that the city’s new residential units would be designed in accordance with best practice protocols, maximising natural light and natural ventilation.

The Macao New Urban Zone’s smaller reclamation projects are located along the southern coast of Macao Peninsula (Zone B), and along Taipa’s northern coast (from east to west, they are zones C, D, E1 and E2).



Lei Heong Jeong

‘SMART CITY’ ASPIRATIONS

Macao’s infrastructure is not all housing and transport links; digitalisation is also an important part of the city’s evolution. In fact, “smart city development” was highlighted as a key means of enhancing Macao’s competitiveness in the SAR’s 2016-2020 Five-Year Development Plan. Its 2021-2025 Five-Year Plan called to “expedite the development of a ‘Digital Macao.’”

A smart city is a technologically advanced urban area that leverages technology to collect data then uses its findings to streamline municipal management. The aim is to run things as smoothly, efficiently and sustainably as possible, ultimately enhancing the well-being of residents. The roll-out of 5G in late 2022 was a major boon for Macao’s smart city aspirations.

However, the 2019 arrival of the Macao One Account app was likely the most revolutionary development on this front. Through it, Macao residents are able to carry out hundreds of administrative tasks with the tap of a finger. Through the ‘My

Education’ function, for example, parents can enrol their kids in kindergarten and students can apply for scholarships. The ‘My Health’ function allows users to download medical certificates, book a vaccination and order prescription refills. They can also use the app to renew their ID card, dog licence or vehicle registration, pay utility bills, find a job and access their digital wallet.

From July this year, permanent residents have even been able to use their Macao One Accounts to access a QR code that lets them cross the Hong Kong border without having to present any physical ID. Over 620,000 local residents, about 91 percent of the population, had a Macao One Account as of 31 October 2024.

Other smart city developments have included the multifunctional e-wallet MPay, which supports international digital payment in more than 40 countries, including Portugal, Australia, Japan, the Philippines and the US. The Macau Pass, meanwhile, is a smart card that can be used to pay for bus trips, parking metres, convenience store items and many other purchases in the SAR.

The Macau Pass was co-developed by the United Nations University Institute (UNU) in Macao in the early 2000s and the institute’s current director, Jingbo Huang, says she is proud of how ubiquitous the card has become. She notes that UNU has been intimately involved in transforming Macao into a smart city since the beginning, through organising conferences on cutting-edge technologies and workshops for government officials, local students and local youth.



“Digital technology plays a key role in smart city development, and UNU Macau will continue to support Macao’s smart city development with our expertise,” Huang says. “We will also continue to connect local stakeholders and experts around the world in the digital tech field.”

BEYOND MACAO’S BORDERS

While improving local infrastructure has been the SAR government’s priority over the past 25 years, a number of major cross-border projects have either reached fruition or are in the pipeline. These help foster Macao’s integration within the GBA as well as enhance the SAR’s connectivity to the rest of the world.

The HZMB physically links Macao, Hong Kong and the mainland for the

first time and is without doubt the poster child for national integration. A collaborative project carried out by the governments of both SARs and Guangdong Province, this 55-kilometre bridge-and-tunnel system stretches across the Pearl River Delta via four artificial islands. It opened in 2018 and maintains the title of longest open-sea fixed link crossing in the world. At its inauguration ceremony, President Xi Jinping praised the bridge for its potential to contribute to development of the GBA.

The Macao-based architect, Soares, also emphasises the HZMB’s significance: “it places Macao within the regional context of the GBA, allowing it to play a greater role in the broader regional economy,” he says.



Looking even further outwards, the SAR’s government has regularly reinforced its commitment to promoting air travel to and from the city. That’s why one of the most significant infrastructure projects outlined in Macao’s 2024 Five-Year Development Plan is the expansion of the Macao International Airport (landfill works began this year). The project will ultimately involve adding more than 129 hectares to the current facility’s footprint through land reclamation, a process that will be executed in phases according to traffic demand, Macao’s Civil Aviation Authority stated in a press release.

The additional space will be used to park long-haul aircraft and carry out other plane-related activities,

while increasing the airport’s annual passenger capacity by 3 million. An enlarged airport will boost the SAR’s ability to welcome international visitors, helping cement its position as a ‘World Centre of Tourism and Leisure’.

The past quarter century has seen Macao undergo a remarkable transformation. Thanks to careful planning by its leaders, with continuous support from the central government, the city’s extraordinary growth has been matched by equally impressive upgrades to its infrastructure – uplifting residents’ quality of life in a myriad of ways. From embracing digitalisation to fostering both regional and global connectivity, the SAR government’s commitment to progressive prosperity is evident. ●

An expansion project underway at Macao’s international airport will boost annual capacity substantially

(Opposite page) The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge is a tangible reminder of how the GBA brings the two SARs closer to the mainland

A Small City, Making a Substantial Contribution

As Macao becomes increasingly integrated within China, it is leveraging its unique Lusophone connections and a rapidly diversifying economy to help the country open up to the world.

Text **Francisco Leandro**,
Associate Professor at
University of Macau

A narrow channel is all that separates Taipa from the mainland island Hengqin

(Opposite page)
Francisco Leandro

As a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, Macao contributes to national objectives and is fully integrated with the Central Government's vision. It is already an active participant in the Guongdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). However, Macao also retains its own systems. It is a separate customs territory with its own import/export controls and immigration policy, and its unique legal system. It also

maintains a uniquely multicultural way of life.

The situation is win-win. While the GBA gives Macao the necessary leverage to help meet China's national objectives, Macao extends the GBA's global outreach. This is evidenced by the SAR's standing within the global community of Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), rooted in shared language and history.

The SAR is developing quickly under the 'One Country, Two Systems'



António Sammartini

policy – the very thing that allows Macao to maintain its unique aspects and transform them into competitive advantages. It's also what ties Macao to the mainland as a whole. The framework imbues the city with the distinctive characteristics of Chinese modernisation and ensures Macao is fully engaged in transforming China into President Xi Jinping's vision of a "great modern socialist country" from 2035 through the middle of this century.

The Central Government has also granted Macao the position of 'One Centre, One Platform and One Base'. Here, the 'centre' refers to Macao's status as a 'World Centre of Tourism and Leisure'. The 'platform' is Forum Macao, formally the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (the SAR is home to its Permanent Secretariat). The 'base' is cultural. It references the unique fusion of cultures, with an emphasis on Chinese culture, that harmoniously coexist in Macao. This triple foundation is associated with three key drivers of the SAR's development: integration, economic diversification and cooperation.





GCS, Kenny Lou

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng attends the opening ceremony of the 2024 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum and Exhibition (MIECF)

INTEGRATION WITH THE MAINLAND

It's important to think of Macao's integration with the mainland as that of a city incorporated within the GBA. Around the world, bay areas are defined by substantial flows of exchange and significant levels of development. The San Francisco Bay Area in the US and Japan's Greater Tokyo are well-known examples. China's GBA has been advancing since its 2017 inception and today it is equipped with an impressive array of infrastructures: six major airports, seven deep seaports, two of the longest bridges in the world and state-of-the-art network of interconnected railways. The GBA is fueled by the Central Government's desire to transform it into the largest, most advanced megalopolis in the world.

Macao brings its numerous attributes to this dynamic region, many of which contribute to China's outward-looking ambitions.

These include its international legal personality, low taxation regime, separate customs territory, the number and quality of its universities, and its long-standing relationships with Portuguese-speaking countries around the world.

Then there's the Mainland and Macao Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), signed in 2003. The free trade-like agreement facilitates commercial and investment flows between the two parties, deepening Macao's role as a platform for Sino-Lusophone cooperation.

The Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is another manifestation of Macao-mainland integration, established to boost Macao's own economic diversification aims. But it will also house a globally recognised financial system focused on the interconnectivity of people, logistics, capital and information through institutional innovations and the development of offshore markets.

THE '1+4' STRATEGY

Economic diversification is underway in Macao, in accordance with the government's '1+4' strategy. This maintains integrated tourism and leisure as Macao's foundational industry, while supporting four emerging industries to grow and thrive. Each of these nascent industries is outward-looking in its own right, aligning with China's vision of economic openness and cooperation at international levels.

For example, the emerging big health industry has an emphasis on medical tourism, inviting people from overseas to travel to Macao and make use of its high-quality medical facilities. There's also a research component involving cooperation between local and overseas medical institutions in a wide range of fields. The Guangdong-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park, located in Hengqin, is another outward-looking aspect of the industry.

Meanwhile, the modern financial services industry is being encouraged to carry out more offshore and cross-border business. Macao aims to become a strategic hub for offshore yuan clearing, boosting financial connectivity between China and its global markets while aligning with China's efforts to internationalise its currency.

A focus on high and new technologies should help Macao attract foreign direct investment from global technology companies looking to establish a presence in the region. It will also necessitate collaboration with international partners for research and development purposes. The industry will allow Macao to serve as a bridge for Chinese tech firms eager to partner with offshore companies, universities and research institutions – facilitating the exchange of knowledge and innovation.

By developing advanced technology products and services, Macao will be able to expand its export portfolio. The tech industry also relies on global supply chains, meaning that – as a vital cog – the SAR will become increasingly embedded within the global economy.

Macao already has very strong foundations in the fourth emerging industry: meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (collectively known as MICE), in conjunction with the staging of large-scale sporting and cultural events. In 2023, the International Association of Exhibition Events granted the then Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute its International Excellence Award for progress the SAR had made in the internationalisation of its MICE industry.





(Opposite page) The 6th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao) took place in April 2024

Exhibition section of China International High-Quality Consumption Expo and Hengqin World Bay Area Forum held in Macao



Xinhua News Agency

The vast majority of the city's MICE events are international in scope, drawing exhibitors and audiences from around the world. Examples include the Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF), the International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum (IIICF), and the Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF).

In terms of cultural events, Macao International Music Festival and Art Macao – the SAR's international art biennale – are just two examples of the many annual fixtures renowned for their high-calibre

offerings each year. And of course everyone knows about the Macao Grand Prix, the iconic motorsport event where contestants from many different countries take on the city's challenging Guia Circuit.

Macao's unique cultural heritage – a fusion of Chinese and Portuguese found nowhere else in the world save in Macao's cuisine, architecture and local dialect – is also a major drawcard for the city. This special appeal is particularly popular with international visitors.

Of course, growing the '1+4' industries takes talent. Macao is casting its net wide to attract

the highest calibre of global talent on offer, who themselves will add to the city's outward-looking perspective. These highly skilled professionals are bringing innovative ideas and fresh approaches to the table, while facilitating cross-border collaboration through their existing networks.

A PLATFORM FOR COOPERATION

One of Macao's most crucial roles in the nation's outward-looking development is as a service platform for commercial and cultural cooperation between China and the PSCs.

innovation and entrepreneurship exchange programmes, and a Sino-Lusophone bilingual training base.

Since its inception, six Ministerial Conferences and an Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of Forum Macao have been convened. In 2004, the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao was established in the SAR, to execute and implement the resolutions approved at the Ministerial Conferences. The Forum last met in April this year, when it highlighted a number of emerging areas of cooperation – including poverty reduction, climate change response, green development and the blue economy.

STRIDING INTO THE FUTURE

The SAR's capacity to contribute to the country's opening up is growing. It's happening as Macao becomes increasingly integrated with the mainland, as its economic diversification is taking off, and as Forum Macao's role expands. The city is already part of one of the most dynamic regions in the world: the GBA. This presents a myriad of opportunities: for its own development under the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, but also for China – to which Macao inextricably belongs. ●

produced tangible results over the years. There's a food distribution centre promoting Portuguese food products in the mainland; a convention and exhibition centre for PSCs interested in targeting the Chinese market; and a service centre that organises trade delegations of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from PSCs to visit the mainland. And all of this happens via Macao, facilitated by the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy.

More initiatives are in the pipeline. Future Forum Macao projects include a China-PSCs financial services platform, a yuan clearing centre for PSCs, a China-PSCs cultural exchange hub, youth

Forum Macao was established in 2003 in Macao. Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, China, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Timor Leste were the founding members of this multilateral, intergovernmental cooperation mechanism. They've since been joined by Sao Tome and Principe (in 2017) and Equatorial Guinea (in 2022), bringing membership up to 10 countries.

Since Forum Macao's establishment, trade between China and PSCs has grown 20-fold and China has become one of the most important trade partners for each of the other nine members.

Three 'centres' are at the heart of Forum Macao, and each has



António Sammarful



A Quarter Century of Growth, Modernisation and Integration

What Macao has achieved since the Chinese government resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macao in 1999 is nothing short of remarkable.

Text **Harald Brüning**

The Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s first quarter of a century has been characterised by astounding growth on virtually every level, along with the speedy modernisation of its public administration system. In the process, residents' lives have improved in leaps and bounds.

Of course, the SAR's progress goes hand-in-hand with the mainland's own stunning economic and technological development drive. The Central Government has provided Macao with consistent, strong support since the region's

return to the motherland, when the Macao SAR was established.

During an inspection visit to Macao in December 2019, President Xi Jinping emphasised that the whole nation was proud of Macao's achievements and progress since its return to the motherland, and its successful implementation of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy. He praised Macao for actively embracing integration within China's national development framework.

That visit also saw Xi preside over former Macao Legislative Assembly (AL) President Ho Iat Seng's swearing in as the SAR's fifth-term chief executive.

OUTSTANDING GAINS

Looking at the figures over the past 25 years, Macao's growth can only be described as a remarkable accomplishment. For starters, according to official data, Macao's population rose by almost 60 percent between the first quarter of 2000 and the first quarter of this year.

On the gross domestic product (GDP) front, Macao's expansion has been equally awe-inspiring. Expenditure-based GDP at current prices rose by nearly 560 percent between 2001 and 2023, hitting 379.5 billion patacas last year. Macao now enjoys one of the world's highest per capita GDPs when adjusted for purchasing power.

Macao's tourism and leisure industry is vitally important to its economy and its growth since 1999 has been monumental. The number of visitors arriving in the city grew by 432 percent between 1999 and 2019: from 7.4 million to 39.4 million arrivals. Visitor numbers have not yet fully recovered to their pre-pandemic high and the government has set a target of 33 million arrivals for this year.

The number of hotel guests overnighing in the city grew more than six-fold from 1999 to 2023. The number of hotel rooms in the city, meanwhile, was up almost five-fold.

AMBITIOUS MODERNISATION

Thanks to its rapid economic growth and strong backing from the Central Government, the SAR has been able to pull off an ambitious modernisation drive that began soon after the region's return to the motherland.

One of the first modernisation measures was the complete overhaul of Macao's nearly 180-year-old licensed gaming sector, resulting in a world-class collection of integrated resorts run by six operators. The revamp was in line with the Central Government's plan for Macao to become a 'World Centre of Tourism and Leisure.'

Indeed, present-day Macao is one of the world's most visited destinations. It offers tourists a wide range of attractions including UNESCO World Heritage-listed monuments and sites, a multicuisine

gastronomy and a unique East-meets-West architectural environment. Moreover, the city is also a major shopping destination thanks to its advantageous position as a separate customs territory with comparatively low taxes and free port.

The swift modernisation drive has included digitalisation of the SAR's public administration system. Life in the city has become much more convenient through the likes of the Macao One Account mobile app for example, which covers a wide range of public services.

Residents can use it to cross the border with Hong Kong, book vaccinations for their children, pay bills, register their vehicles and all manner of other tasks.

Meanwhile, public entities such as the Identification Services Bureau, Health Bureau and Financial Services Bureau have introduced user-friendly facilities like 24/7 interactive digital kiosks. The Macao Government Information Bureau releases a slew of press releases and transcripts of important speeches in Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Portuguese and English every single day.

Then there's the city's physical infrastructure. Two post-1999 bridges between the peninsula and Taipa Island have increased the number of sea-crossing bridges to four. The city's Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system is developing rapidly, as are various road projects. Macao's government is also in the midst of an ambitious social housing development plan.

On the health front, the impressive Macao Union Hospital opened its

doors to patients earlier this year. This private-public partnership is not only upgrading the quality medical services available for local residents, but helping to diversify Macao's travel industry by developing a medical tourism sector.

Modernisation also requires large numbers of highly-qualified human resources. Due to Macao's relatively small local workforce, the government has launched an offshore talent acquisition scheme offering desirable work and residency permits to those willing to lend a hand to Macao's ongoing development.

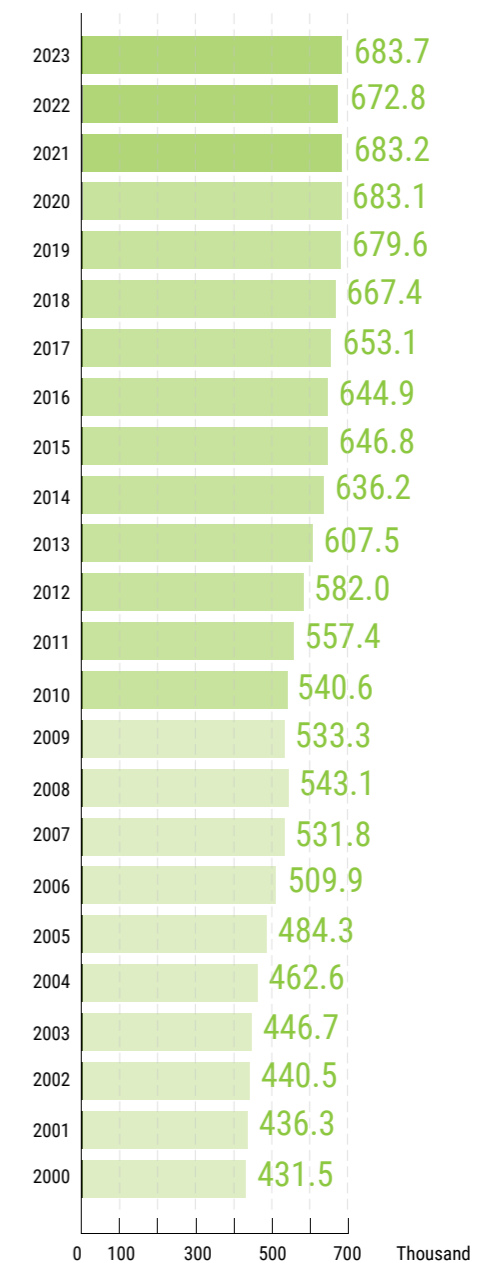
Complementary to the recruitment drive, the National Immigration Administration has started issuing mainland travel permits to foreign permanent residents in Macao. These make it far easier for non-Chinese citizens to travel to the mainland and allow stays of up to 90 days per trip. The permits are another incentive for foreign nationals and their families to settle in Macao.

INTEGRATION SINE QUA NON

Macao's progress proceeds in partnership with the mainland's. Gradual integration both on a national and regional level is a necessary condition for Macao's shining future.

This national integration process began soon after its 1999 return to the motherland, when the Central Government and SAR government inked the Mainland and Macao Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), which was followed by a raft of supplementary arrangements granting Macao further liberalisations and preferences. Macao, its businesspeople and professionals in particular, have benefited immensely from CEPA.

Population Between 2000-2023



Source: Statistics and Census Service

Macao's regional integration process gained speed and substance when, in July 2017, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao signed the Framework Agreement on Deepening Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Cooperation in the Development of the Bay Area along with the National Development and Reform Commission, China's macroeconomic management agency.

The 2019 promulgation of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) marked a new milestone in the development of the GBA, which many have predicted will become a world-leading sci-tech innovation hub over the coming decade.

The integration process strengthened even further in 2021, when the Central Government unveiled a masterplan for the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The island offers Macao residents a broad range of benefits. Quite literally, Hengqin provides Macao with more "breathing space" – for innovation in particular. Urban planners expect the zone to propel Macao's economic development and technological innovation to greater heights, based on the SAR Government's '1+4' economic diversification strategy.

The '1+4' strategy aims to reinforce Macao's function as a global centre for integrated tourism and leisure while facilitating the development of four emerging industries: big health; modern financial services; high and new technology; and the staging of large-scale business, sports and cultural events.

As Macao's national integration strengthens, so too does its role on the international stage. Under the name 'Macao, China', the SAR is a member of the World Trade Organization, World Customs Organization, World Health Organization and the Bangkok-based United Nations

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Integration and internationalisation complement each other. The Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (known as Forum Macao) is just one example of this in action. Headquartered in its namesake city, the forum fosters trade, cultural exchanges, investment opportunities and training activities between China and nine Portuguese-speaking countries across Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. As such, Forum Macao plays a meaningful role in advancing President Xi's holistic vision of "community with a shared future for mankind".

Macao can also be expected to do its part to promote China's three great international initiatives, put forward by President Xi over the past few years, namely the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

ONE OF ASIA'S MOST DYNAMIC CITIES

All this growth, modernisation and integration has been achieved under the guidance of three chief executives: Edmund Ho, Chui Sai On and Ho Iat Seng. Each has conscientiously implemented the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy and enjoyed the the Central Government's steadfast backing.

Over the past 25 years Macao has grown into one of Asia's most dynamic cities. But it's also one of the world's safest cities in terms of crime rates, as well as in a broader sense; the SAR Government is dedicated to protecting national security through appropriately updated legislation.

The SAR's next quarter of a century will end in late 2049, with the marking of its 50th anniversary – alongside the People's Republic of China's centennial. As things stand, one can expect both the nation and the SAR to be enjoying highly developed, seamlessly integrated socioeconomic conditions at that time. ●

A balanced approach to development allows vibrant green spaces and a historic city centre to exist alongside bustling residential neighborhoods and world-class integrated resorts



POLITICS

President Xi Jinping Meets Chief Executive-designate Sam Hou Fai in Beijing

During a three-day trip to the country's capital in November, the Central Government officially appointed Sam Hou Fai as Macao's sixth-term chief executive. In Beijing, President Xi Jinping conveyed his trust in Sam to fully and faithfully implement the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy.

Text **Christian Ritter** and **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

On 1 November, China's State Council officially appointed Sam Hou Fai as the sixth-term chief executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR). The appointment ceremony, held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, was witnessed by President Xi Jinping. The ceremony formalised Sam's status as the SAR's chief executive-designate, which he will remain until being sworn in as its new leader on 20 December – the same day Macao celebrates the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland.

In Beijing, Xi personally congratulated Sam on his appointment. He commended the former president of Macao's Court of Final Appeal for his firm stance in loving the country and Macao, as well as for his contributions to the SAR's prosperity and stability during a long tenure as its top judge.

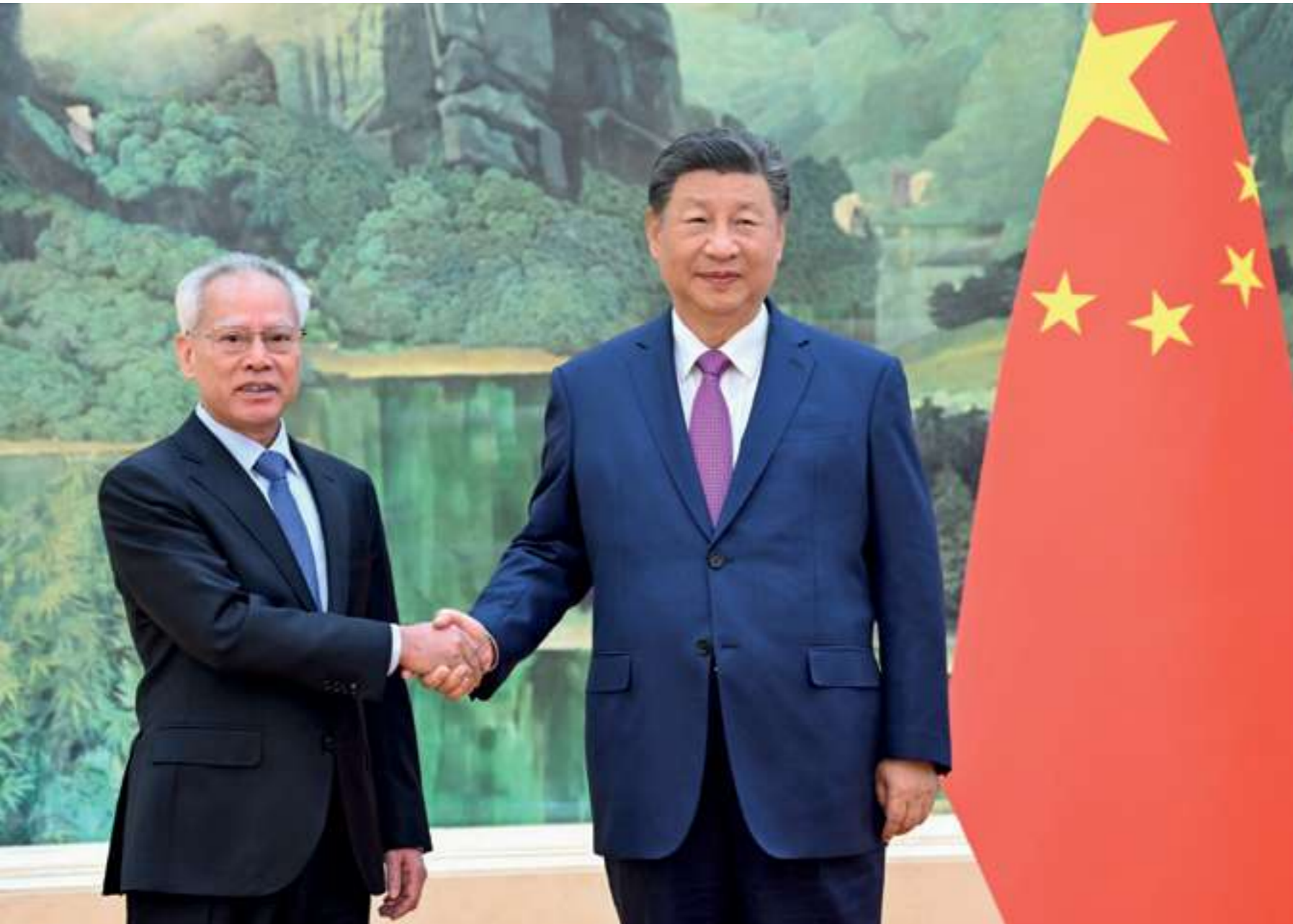
Xi praised Sam's "broad recognition and support from the society of Macao", which he said was demonstrated by a decisive election result in October. "The central authorities fully

acknowledge this and have full trust in you," Xi noted.

He also highlighted the remarkable success of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy with Macao characteristics over the past quarter of a century. Xi said that the central authorities remained committed to fully and faithfully implementing the principle, which has allowed Macao's own people to administer the city with a high degree of autonomy since its return to the motherland in 1999.

The country's president urged Sam to fulfil his mission in leading the SAR's sixth-term government by uniting all segments of Macao society and continuously breaking new ground in practising the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy.

At the ceremony, Premier Li Qiang presented Sam with a decree of the State Council appointing him as Macao's sixth-term chief executive. Two other senior members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, were also in attendance: the current first-ranked secretary of the Secretariat of the CPC Cai Qi and Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang.



XI JINPING'S VISION FOR MACAO

After spending three days in Beijing, Sam returned to Macao and briefed local media on his discussions with Xi – which included guidance from the president on how to govern the SAR. At front and centre was the importance of continuing to comprehensively, accurately and unswervingly implement the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ policy, with a focus on maintaining Macao’s unique characteristics. According to Xi, national security is a fundamental principle of the policy and of utmost importance, Sam noted.

Economic diversification was another key concern for both the

Central and SAR Governments, said Sam, who promised Xi that he would strive to create favourable conditions for the city’s emerging industries. He also reaffirmed his commitment to the ‘One Centre, One Platform, One Base’ development strategy, which seeks to position Macao as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, a commercial and trade platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and a base for cultural exchange where Chinese culture is dominant but co-exists with different cultures.

Sam said that Xi highlighted the significance of Macao’s participation in developing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the second phase of the Guangdong-

Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

With regards to social welfare in the SAR, Sam said that Xi was closely attuned to the well-being of Macao’s population. He said that the president had requested Macao’s sixth-term government to focus on areas including elderly care, healthcare in general, transport and supporting parents to raise their children. Sam pledged that his government would introduce new social welfare measures that were fair, targeted and designed to better assist those in need.

SAM HOU FAI'S CRITERIA FOR APPOINTING TOP OFFICIALS

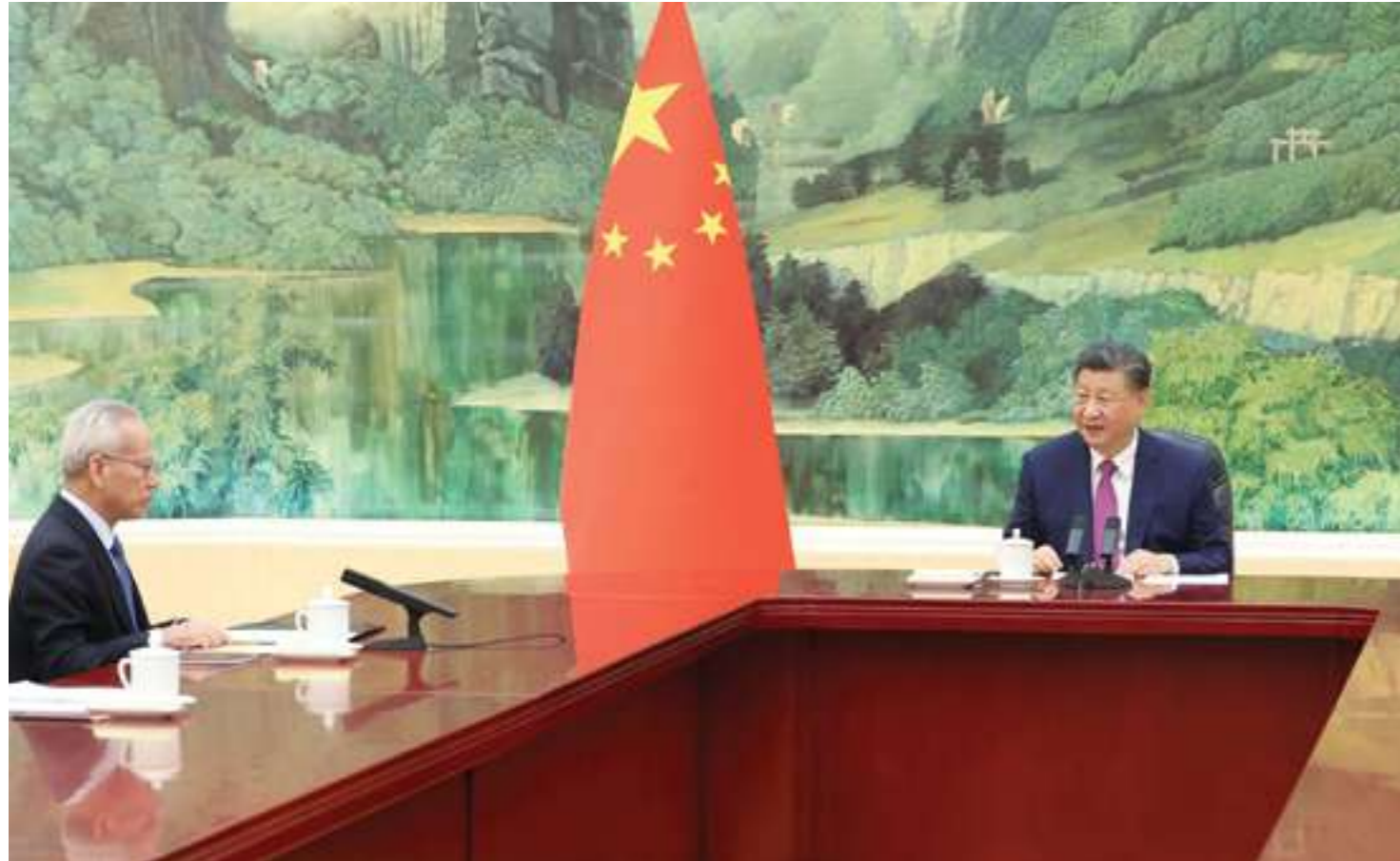
During his press briefing, Sam outlined the criteria that will inform his selection of top officials for Macao’s sixth-term government. Each candidate must be a patriot and have the Central Government’s trust; be committed to safeguarding the nation’s sovereignty, security and development interests; demonstrate their love for Macao; have earned recognition from the

local population; be dedicated to serving the public; possess a team spirit; possess governance capability with a willingness to shoulder responsibilities; and have a strong sense of integrity, a quality that Sam deemed indispensable in public officials.

Sam further noted that the new administration would continuously build consensus, foster resilience and pursue innovation under the leadership of the Central Government.

According to Macao’s Basic Law, the chief executive is responsible for nominating and reporting the appointment of Macao’s nine principal officials and the chief prosecutor to the Central Government. ●

Xi (right) personally congratulated Sam on his appointment



Premier Li Qiang (right) presented Sam Hou Fai with the State Council decree of appointment

(Left) Chief Executive-designate Sam said he was deeply honoured and grateful for the trust placed in him by the central authorities



SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Macao Recognises its Outstanding Residents and Organisations

Five Golden Lotuses were conferred at an awards ceremony in November, along with more than two dozen other accolades for achievements, contributions and distinguished services to society. Two of the Special Administrative Region's loftiest institutions – the Holy House of Mercy and Conde de São Januário Hospital – were recognised in this year's honours, as were a number of Executive Council members.



Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**

(Left to right) Leonel Alberto Alves, Peter Lam Kam Seng and Andrew Chan Chak Mo were individually awarded the Golden Lotus

(Opposite page) The Macau Holy House of Mercy also received the second-highest accolade for its contributions to the SAR

Thirty-two individuals and entities were formally recognised by Macao's government for their achievements, outstanding contributions and distinguished services at the Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s annual honours ceremony in late November. While Macao's highest decoration of honour, the Grand Lotus, was not awarded this year, Golden Lotuses were conferred on five worthy recipients.

The Golden Lotus, Macao's second-highest accolade, was awarded to the Macau Holy House of Mercy, the Health Bureau's Conde de São Januário Hospital, and three distinguished individuals: Leonel Alberto Alves, Peter Lam Kam Seng, and Andrew Chan Chak Mo. All three men are members of Macao's Executive Council.

The Macau Holy House of Mercy (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, or SCMM in Portuguese) was established in 1569 by Bishop Belchior Carneiro. The longest-running social solidarity organisation in Macao, it focuses on providing services to the elderly, children and the blind. Its Senado Square premises

is also home to a valuable collection of artefacts highlighting early exchanges between Chinese and Western cultures. These mainly religious objects are displayed in a museum that is open to the public. Conde de São Januário Hospital, meanwhile, was founded in 1874. The public infirmary currently offers more than 1,000 hospital beds, 29 specialities and 24 subspecialities, providing comprehensive healthcare and emergency services to Macao residents.

Alves, meanwhile, is a lawyer who spent his career practising in Macao after graduating from the University of Lisbon's law faculty, in Portugal. He is currently a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. A well-respected leader in the Macanese community, Alves also helped found Generations International School.

Lam is an experienced businessman currently serving as the chair of the University Council of UM. He is chairman of the Board of Directors of Macau Urban Renewal Limited, and played an important role in implementing the Macau New Neighbourhood housing project in Hengqin.

Chan, one of Macao's lawmakers, is the managing director of Future Bright Group, which operates food and catering, food souvenir and property investment businesses across Greater China. Chan also chairs the United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macau. He was appointed president of the Sports and Olympic Committee of Macao earlier this year.





Golden Lotus recipient Conde de São Januário Hospital has served Macao for 150 years

Decorations of honour are conferred on individuals or entities that have made outstanding contributions locally or outside the city, enhanced the image and reputation of the SAR, or contributed in an exceptional way to a field benefitting Macao's development.

Macao's third highest decoration of honour, the Silver Lotus, was awarded to the Macau Industrial Association and Luso International Banking Limited this year. The Macau Industrial Association is known for promoting the Made in Macau brand and implementing the M-Mark (a quality certification programme for Macau products). Luso International Banking Limited was recognised for its significant contributions to financial innovation and economic development in the SAR over the past 50 years.

A large number of medals of merit were also presented at the ceremony, along with other medals and titles.

Professional Merit Medals went to:

- Kong Chio Fai, a US-educated technology specialist dedicated to innovation in the internet sector.

- Executive Council member Frederico Ma Chi Ngai, who is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
- Executive Council member Ieong Tou Hong, who holds a master's degree in economics from Jinan University and a PhD in business management from the Macau University of Science and Technology.
- Executive Council member Zhang Zongzhen, who holds a master's degree in optoelectronics and a PhD in management engineering from the Huazhong University of Science and Technology.
- Executive Council member Chao Weng Hou, who is also deputy general manager of the Inclusive Finance Department of the Bank of China's Macao branch.

Industrial and Commercial Merit Medals went to:

- The Sociedade de Transportes Colectivos de Macau (TCM), one of Macao's two public bus operators, has been operating bus routes for 50 years. In 2010, TCM was acquired by Nam Kwong Group – the first state-owned enterprise headquartered in Macao.

- The pharmaceutical company Ashford Laboratories, which specialises in the production of sterile ophthalmic and auricular drops, as well as emulsions, ointments and external solutions. Its products are marketed locally, in Southeast Asia and in Portuguese-speaking countries.
- BoardWare Intelligence Technology Ltd, which delivers information technology solutions to public services and businesses across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

A Tourism Merit Medal went to:

- The Macau Hotel Association, which was founded in 1985 to promote connections and exchanges between Macao's hotel sector and the outside world.

Educational Merit Medals went to:

- Pui Ching Middle School, which was founded in Guangzhou in 1889 and moved to Macao in 1938 and currently educates around 3,700 pupils.
- Escola Tong Sin Tong, which has provided free, high-quality comprehensive education for underprivileged children for the past 100 years.
- Associate dean at the University of Macau's law faculty, Iau Teng Pio. Iau, a delegate of the National Committee of the CPPCC and a member of the Executive Council of Macao and a member of the Legislative Assembly, holds a PhD in law from Beijing's China University of Political Science and Law.
- University of Macau professor Mak Pui In, who specialises in electrical and computer engineering. Mak is the director of the State Key Laboratory of Analog and Mixed-Signal VLSI, as well as deputy director of the Institute of Microelectronics.

A Cultural Merit Medal went to:

- The lawyer, writer, playwright and composer Henrique Miguel Rodrigues de Senna Fernandes, a dedicated advocate for Macanese culture and the co-founder of the Doci Papiaçam di Macau Theatre Group.

Philanthropic Merit Medals went to:

- Traditional Chinese medicine master Kong Su Kan, who specialises in orthopaedics and traumatology. Kong developed his namesake Analgesic Oil.

- Executive Council member Lee Chong Cheng, who also heads the Macau Federation of Trade Unions and is a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
- Executive Council member Chan Ka Leong, the president of the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations.

A Sports Merit Medal went to:

- The Macau Athletics Association, which has been responsible for the Macau International Marathon since 1987 and helps promote Macao as a 'City of Sports'.

A Medal of Dedication went to:

- Choi Sio Un, who currently heads the Department of Social Solidarity of the Social Affairs Bureau.

A Community Service Medal went to:

- Social worker Hoi Choi Han, head of the Lok Yeung Elderly Day Care Centre of the General Union of Neighbourhood Association of Macao.

Honorary Titles of Merit went to:

- The Pui Tou School's Astronomy Team, which discovered a new asteroid in 2023.
- Two Pui Ching Middle School students, Xu Ziheng and Leong Pok Hei, who represented Macao at last year's Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles, US, and received awards in their respective categories.
- Saint Paul School student Ung Man Kit, who represented Macao in the Microsoft Office Specialist World Championship held in Anaheim, US, and became the world champion in Microsoft Excel (Office 2019).
- Sacred Heart Canossian College student Wong Tsan Ying, who represented Macao in the Microsoft Office Specialist World Championship held in Anaheim, US, and became the world champion in Microsoft Word (Office 2019).

A ceremony conferring the decorations, medals of merit and honorary titles took place on 29 November, and was presided over by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng. ●



HISTORY

Government Headquarters Commemorates Double Anniversaries

One of Macao's most iconic landmarks and a classified historical monument in its own right, the Government Headquarters celebrated the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of the Macao Special Administrative Region with an open day led by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá** and **Kenny Fong**

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng posed for photos with visitors to the Government Headquarters

Two historic milestones are being celebrated in Macao this year: the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR). In a fitting tribute to both, the city's Government Headquarters opened its doors to the public over two days in late October. Through allowing residents to explore the very halls where pivotal moments in Macao's trajectory have unfolded, including the ceremony marking Macao's return to the motherland, the government offered people a chance to engage directly with their city's living history.

The 2024 Government Headquarters Open Day was held on 26 and 27 October, offering visitors a rare opportunity to take a leisurely tour of this iconic feat of architecture. Highlights of the Open Day included dance and musical performances by the Public Security Police Force Music Band and students from the Macao Conservatory of the Cultural Affairs Bureau's School of Music and School of Dance.



The distinctive pink structure was built in the Pombaline architectural style, which became popular after 1755

The gardens and grounds of the Government Headquarters Protocol Building were adorned with exquisite floral arrangements and displays for the occasion. These created a range of landscape designs and a special ambience.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng personally greeted visitors at the Government Headquarters on the second day of the event, warmly conversing with the visitors present. He noted that holding the Government Headquarters Open Day in the year of the

dual anniversaries was of special significance and he praised the commemorative flower exhibition displayed on the grounds.

Ho took the opportunity to engage with visitors, posing for photos with residents and tourists alike. The chief executive welcomed visitors to explore the rooms and halls of the historic building to deepen their understanding of the Government Headquarters, and expressed his hope that everyone could enjoy the happy time of the dual anniversaries.



Image courtesy of Macao Foundations' "Macao Memory" website / Lei Kun Min

Despite numerous renovations over the years, Government Headquarters retains the same style and charm familiar from many decades past

(Below) Visitors take the opportunity to snap selfies while Government Headquarters is open to the public

Some residents told the Chief Executive that they were very happy to participate in the Open Day and felt that it had enhanced their connection with the government. Ho's warm interactions with members of the public also stood testament to the strength of the Macao SAR Government's relationship with residents.

A number of tourists said they purposefully chose to travel to Macao during the Government Headquarters Open Day; after seeing the pink building with their own eyes, they reflected that their trip was well worth it.

Built in 1849 by Macao-born architect José Agostinho Tomás de Aquino, the Government Headquarters was previously known as the "Palácio do Cercal" (Palace of Cercal)

and is an example of the Pombaline architectural style. Characterised by simplicity and multifunctionality, the style can be found throughout Portuguese-speaking regions of the world. ●



Xinhua News Agency

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Macao is Undergoing a Digital Revolution

The Macao One Account integrates a wide range of public services for over 621,000 users. From accessing health records to crossing the border, the platform is reshaping the way residents interact with their government and positioning Macao as a forward-thinking smart city.



Text **Cathy Lai**

Border crossing is just one facet of everyday life made simpler by the Macao One Account

In today's fast-paced, digital world, governments around the globe are striving to meet the demands of their increasingly tech-savvy populations. Macao is no exception. The Special Administrative Region (SAR) has been steadily building a robust e-government infrastructure aimed at making services more efficient, accessible and transparent for residents. At the heart of this transformation is the Macao One Account, an integrated platform launched in 2019 that delivers electronic public services across sectors such as social welfare, transportation, healthcare and education.

The platform has garnered widespread praise from the local community. "Everything is inside the Macao One Account now, including my identity documents," says Roger, a 37-year-old Macao resident who works as an administrative officer at Macao's Health Bureau. "When I come back to Macao from travelling, I just scan a QR code on my phone at immigration. It's really convenient."

The platform has not only streamlined travel, but simplified daily life. "I can pay bills, retrieve e-banking passwords and access medical

documents, all through the app. I don't even need to step into a bank or clinic," Roger shares.

Today, more than 621,000 people use the Macao One Account's 430-plus services. Popular features include 'My Health' for viewing health records and making appointments at government health centres; 'My Vehicles' for managing car insurance and paying motor vehicle taxes; and 'Electronic Identity' for border crossings and passport applications.

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials, SAFP) is the agency responsible for the app's development and maintenance. It tells *Macao* magazine that the platform has "transitioned from a 'government-oriented' system to a 'user-oriented' one, focusing on delivering high-frequency, impactful services that have greatly simplified how residents manage daily administrative tasks."

As the Macao One Account becomes increasingly integral to the daily lives of local residents, we explore the journey behind its development and how it's transforming governance through cutting-edge technology.



24-hour self-service centres expand on what e-governance can deliver – without sacrificing convenience

WHERE THE LAW AND TECHNOLOGY INTERSECT

Macao's e-governance journey began with a vision for streamlined, user-centric services. This vision first materialised in 2009 with the introduction of ePass, a platform offering limited online services like voter registration inquiries, medical report applications and a way to find out about provident funds. However, SAFF says the platform saw limited uptake due to a lack of legal support and insufficient focus on residents' needs.

Learning from these shortcomings, the government released a new and improved version in 2019, calling it the Macao One Account. Ever since, this constantly improving platform has been empowering residents to manage a range of government services from a single digital interface.

A critical part of being able to deliver e-governance has been the establishment of a cloud computing centre, which also happened in 2019.

"The centre is equipped with a robust cloud platform and cybersecurity systems, so that it can provide sufficient computing power, storage space, and security guarantees for departments. It ensures the safe and stable operation of various e-government projects," SAFF explains. The centre can be considered a backbone for the project.

A year later, the government enacted the Electronic Government Law to complement Macao's digital transformation. This expanded the scope of digital services, allowing residents to use electronic certificates, digital licences and facial recognition for secure identification. "The law has established the legal validity of actions like digital identification," says the bureau. "This has not only made it more convenient for residents to enjoy e-government services, but also simplifies administrative processes within government departments."

The new law has also enabled the Macao One Account to launch a fresh suite of electronic public services – things like letting residents apply for civil servant jobs through the app and foreign domestic workers process their stay permits online.

REDEFINING CONVENIENCE

Before the Macao One Account, residents had to carry an assortment of cards to go about their days. Say, a patient card from the Health Bureau, a card from the Sports Bureau giving access to public sporting facilities, and a Senior Residents Card from the Social Welfare Bureau. But since 2021, the 'My Card' feature has consolidated these cards into a single digital wallet, with each e-card retaining the same legal validity as its physical counterpart.

That year also saw the platform introduce online proof-of-life verification for the Social Security Fund, the Social Welfare Bureau and the Pension Fund. With inter-department data integration, residents can now complete this verification from a mobile, whether they're here in Macao, in the mainland or even overseas. You do this by logging in your One Account and performing a few facial recognition actions, like nodding or blinking into your phone screen. Family members are also allowed to help their parents complete the facial recognition process through their own accounts, in cases where less digitally literate parents find it challenging to do it by themselves.

"The Macao One Account makes it super convenient to access services online, and I can do everything from booking health appointments to managing vehicle registrations in one place," according to Roger. "It's a relief not having to go back to the government offices for simple tasks."

AN EVER-EVOLVING PLATFORM

In 2022, the platform was upgraded to the Macao One Account 2.0, further expanding its service offerings. Residents can now submit court documents, pay litigation fees and settle taxes or utility bills through the app. The 'My Information' feature also provides timely updates on news, weather alerts and evacuation guidelines during natural disasters.

Last year, seven 24-hour self-service centres were established across the Macao Peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. These centres are equipped with kiosks for processing applications and issuing identity documents. For instance, the 'Smart Collect' smart locker allows residents, businesses and organisations to collect documents from the Identification

Services Bureau and the Legal Affairs Bureau – as well as various licences from the Municipal Affairs Bureau.

“By implementing the concept of online-offline integration, the service opens up a convenient ‘on-the-go’ solution for Macao residents and allows them to handle tasks at fingertips,” says SAFF. “This has removed the need for queuing during office hours to collect documents and greatly improved convenience for the public.”

Of course, the evolution of the Macao One Account is more than just moving offline services online. Whole departments have had to restructure their processes, optimising them through interconnected data sharing that requires ongoing cooperation with other departments. For example, the

'Integrated Birth Services' feature, which launched this year, is a collaboration between the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, the Legal Affairs Bureau, the Identification Services Bureau, the Social Security Fund, the Health Bureau and Kiang Wu Hospital. The feature allows residents to register a baby's birth and apply for the newborn's ID card via the Macao One Account.

“Throughout the implementation of e-governance, different government departments have gradually recognised the benefits it brings to both residents and administrative work,” says SAFF. “This motivated them to continue the cooperation and support for the operation of the Macao One Account.”

To ensure a smooth digital transition for residents, SAFF has partnered with the Macao Productivity and Technology Transfer Center to run workshops educating the public on Macao One Account's functions. These sessions help people maximise the platform's benefits. Additionally, the government collaborates with departments like the Municipal Affairs Bureau to host lectures and workshops that specifically target seniors, to improve their understanding of e-services. More than 70 such events have been held since 2020.

SERVICES BEYOND BORDERS

As Macao's national integration progresses, the SAR's government is extending the Macao One Account's reach and cooperating with regional authorities across the mainland. In 2023, Macao's Identification Services Bureau established self-service kiosks in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, offering identification-related services such as passport applications and Hong Kong-Macao travel permits to Macao residents living in Hengqin, part of Zhuhai.



Meanwhile, the Macao One Account app offers ticketing and appointment services for Hengqin, covering social security, notarisation and real estate registration. According to SAFF, a 24/7 self-service centre is set to open there soon, with kiosks and remote service counters enabling residents to handle cross-border transactions via video conferencing.

“This effort aims to benefit the Macao residents studying, working and living in the cooperation zone,” says SAFF. “By allowing them to access these services without requiring them to return to Macao, the integration and development of daily life between Macao and Hengqin is further enhanced.”

The development of e-governance in Macao has been nothing short of transformative. What began as a legal and logistical challenge has evolved into a well-integrated, user-focused platform. The Macao One Account is not just an app – it symbolises the SAR's commitment to modernising public administration. ●

The government is running workshops to help even the least tech-savvy members of the public make the switch

(Opposite page) On-site staff at service centres provide guidance to people when needed



慶祝中華人民共和國成立75周年及澳門特別行政區成立25周年

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th Anniversary of the Macao SAR

《澳門志·地理分志》

Macao Gazetteer Series: Book of Geography Launch Ceremony and Compilation Sharing Session

發佈儀式暨編纂分享會

· 2024/10/21 ·

Text Christopher Chu
Photos Xinhua News Agency



HISTORY

A New Chronicle of Macao's Identity

The first volume of a significant seven-part literary project documenting key moments and places in Macao's history has been published. *The Macao Gazetteer Series: Book of Geography* is being lauded as an essential cultural initiative that not only fosters a stronger sense of identity among locals but inspires scholars to delve deeper into the history of this unique city.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng
(centre left) holds a first
edition of the new gazetteer at
its launch ceremony in October

The first instalment of a homegrown literary series documenting Macao was unveiled in late October, at the University of Macau (UM). The launch ceremony, officiated by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, introduced *The Macao Gazetteer Series: Book of Geography*, which Ho described as one of the most important cultural projects since the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) in 1999.

This ambitious initiative is part of the government's broader vision to leverage Macao's historical ties with the West and attract scholars from around the world to study the cultural conflux that has been shaping this unique city for centuries. Proposed in the SAR's second five-year plan (2021-2025), but conceived earlier, the *Macao Gazetteer Series* reflects the government's dedication to transforming Macao into a knowledge hub. That push is part of the 'One Centre, One Platform, One Base' initiative, whereby Chinese culture dominates and yet harmoniously coexists with other cultures. At the ceremony, Ho expressed hope that the publication would strengthen residents' sense of belonging to both the nation and Macao.

The *Book of Geography* offers a detailed, academically researched account of Macao's history, natural environment, demographic changes and more. Consisting of more than a million words spread across 1,500 pages, the hefty tome has been divided into two volumes and eight chapters. Its sheer size underscores the ambition of the project, as noted by Agnes Lam, chief editor of the gazetteer and director of the Centre for Macau Studies at UM.

"No one is an expert in everything," she tells *Macao* magazine, highlighting the collaborative effort of various experts and academics from different fields who worked closely together to weave threads of history, folklore and different perspectives into the publication.

Lam describes the chronicle as a collection of intriguing facts and raw data about Macao, akin to an encyclopaedia where every entry is linked to reliable sources, ensuring the publication's credibility. Beyond verifying the accuracy of their information, its many contributors also aimed to present the material in a way that would resonate with contemporary readers.



NAVIGATING MACAO'S MULTICULTURAL LAYERS

Making sense of the multicultural complexities that run deep in melting pots like Macao is not without challenges. Consistency around the formal names of noteworthy individuals was just one of the more noticeable obstacles, Lam says. She points to a lengthy appendix in the back of the *Book of Geography*, the sole purpose of which is to catalogue key members of Macao's early metropolitan population. The blue and white bilingual street signs found throughout the city also caused confusion, as the Portuguese words and their accompanying Chinese characters are often inconsistent. Some signs provide a direct translation, others simply display Chinese characters that phonetically replicate Portuguese words.

A prime example is Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, the main road running by Senado Square. Two versions of the avenue's name exist in Chinese: one uses the characters '新馬路', while the other spells out the Portuguese name phonetically as '亞美打利庇盧大馬路'. Further complicating matters, locals commonly refer to this road as 'San Ma Lo', a Romanised phonetic rendering of the three-character Chinese name.

In addition to linguistic hurdles, there were also discrepancies in recorded dates. Chinese documents often contain dates referencing the reign of an emperor: "Each time there is a new emperor, another timeline begins," Lam explains. Europeans, on the other hand, used the Gregorian calendar, which was not widely adopted in Asia until the late 19th century, after the fall of the Qing dynasty.

A RESOURCE FOR FUTURE SCHOLARSHIP

The SAR is renowned for its multicultural spaces, where art, music and cuisine from around the world intersect. "Macao has long been a cultural laboratory, that is nothing new," Lam says. She points to traditional Portuguese and Chinese celebrations, such as the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord and the Mid-Autumn Festival, both of which take place along the same cobblestone streets. In the former, a Christian cross is transported down the *calçada*. In the latter, colourful lanterns are on display.

Lam hopes the gazetteer will ignite scholarly interest in Macao, encouraging further research into the city's unique confluence of ideologies and cultures. By expanding the knowledge base for future generations, the series aims to deepen the world's understanding of this one-of-a-kind region, she says.

The government plans to eventually release seven gazetteers in total, each covering a different subject (these will include law, the economy and society). The remaining six are currently in various stages of production. While the *Book of Geography* is only available in Chinese at present, the entire series will eventually be translated into both Portuguese and English, as well as digitised for online access. The first edition of the gazetteer saw 1,500 copies published.

Before the next edition arrives in five years' time, a public notice will invite scholars and experts to contribute new findings, and enrich the existing content even further. As Lam says, the current gazetteer is just the beginning of what promises to be a long-term scholarly project. ●

Agnes Lam speaks during the gazetteer's launch ceremony at the University of Macau

(Opposite page) Future printings of the *Book of Geography* will include Portuguese and English-language versions as well



Image courtesy of Agnes Lam

SPORTS

A New Era in Macao Motor Racing has Begun

November saw the iconic Macau Grand Prix host the first-ever Formula Regional World Cup as its main race, the result of a shake-up in the adrenaline-packed motorsports world. *Macao* magazine examines what this change means for racers, spectators and the city.



McLaren junior Ugo Ugochukwu leads the pack in Macao's inaugural Formula Regional race

(Opposite page)
Ugo Ugochukwu celebrates his victory

Text **Erico Dias**

The 71st Macau Grand Prix wrapped up on 17 November, bringing its annual dose of high-speed thrills to spectators braving the relentless rain. Wild weather disrupted several of the event's seven races, but the skies cleared just in time for the inaugural FIA Formula Regional (FR) World Cup, the four-day event's most prestigious race. The introduction of FR marks a significant shift for the Macau Grand Prix, which had been synonymous with Formula 3 (F3) racing for nearly four decades. Indeed, the sudden sunshine felt symbolic, as if the heavens themselves acknowledged the start of a new chapter in the event's storied history.

It was McLaren junior Ugo Ugochukwu, from the US, who claimed victory in the Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s first-ever FR race. The 17-year-old handled the challenging conditions with remarkable composure, starting from pole position and maintaining his lead through all 15 laps. As the high-speed cars whizzed around the Guia Circuit like wasps, weaving between each other and bouncing off the barriers, Ugochukwu managed to avoid several pile-ups – including at the formidable Lisboa Bend, where a crash saw Macao's only local entrant in the race, Tiago Rodrigues, bow out early.

Ugochukwu, racing for France's R-ace GP, beat Germany's Oliver Goethe (part of the Dutch racing team MP Motorsport) and Mexico's Noel León (of Hong Kong's KCMG IXO by Pinnacle Motorsport) into second and third place, respectively. His success saw him join the ranks of legends like Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher, each of whom won the Macau Grand Prix's headline race before becoming a Formula 1 (F1) champion.

Speaking after the event, Ugochukwu said: "I can't describe the feeling, but of course I am super happy. It was quite a tricky race – and I was pushing the whole way. But I was confident with the pace and we've had a great weekend."

Of course, the FIA FR World Cup was not the Macau Grand Prix's only international thriller this year. The FIA Grand Touring (GT) World Cup was a closely fought battle until two frontrunners veered off track at the Lisboa bend during a later lap. This saw Mercedes Benz driver Maro Engel, from Germany, take the lead with two BMW drivers behind him: Brazil's Augusto Farfus and South Africa's Sheldon Van Der Linde. Engel emerged victorious, having defied incredibly wet conditions.

Unfortunately, the rain took its toll on the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix. Prizes were awarded based on qualifying results, with the UK's Davey Todd claiming the title.

WHAT IS FORMULA REGIONAL?

FR is a relatively new class of formula racing, introduced by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) in 2019 as a mid-point between the entry-level Formula 4 (F4) class and the federation's re-jigged F3 format. The restructure has been described by FIA as a "natural consequence" of the sport's ongoing evolution, which has come a long way since the late 1940s, when F1 cars looked like jaunty four-wheeled sausages. In essence, however, it might best be explained as a rebrand.

For the uninitiated, formula racing is an elite kind of motorsport involving open-wheeled, single-seater cars. These vehicles are visually distinctive, with tyres positioned outside their main bodies and room for just one person inside (in contrast to grand tourers, which closely resemble regular road cars). The formula hierarchy is known as the FIA Global Pathway, with F1 at its top. Formula 2 (F2) is the obvious next rung down, but things get a little blurry when it comes to the third, fourth and fifth rungs.

Prior to 2019, a category called GP3 was the third highest level in formula racing. That was followed by F3, then F4 as the bottom rung. Further confusion can arise due to regional variations in the sport, which we won't get into here. Basically, as you climb the ladder of progression, formula cars gain horsepower, go faster

and become more expensive to operate. In 2019, FIA retired the GP3 class and shifted F3 up to the third slot on the ladder (meaning F3 cars from 2019 onwards are significantly higher spec than their pre-2019 counterparts). The shift meant that the old F3 class needed a new name, which is how FR was born. To put it very simply, FIA's Global Pathway used to be F1-F2-GP3-F3-F4. It's now F1-F2-F3-FR-F4.

WHAT DOES FORMULA REGIONAL MEAN FOR MACAO?

The Macau Grand Prix has long-catered to vehicles and drivers on the fourth rung of that ladder. Almost all of its main events have been F3 since 1983, when the late Brazilian racing superstar Senna won that inaugural race. At that time, F3 was replacing a fading class of racing called Formula Pacific. It is worth remembering that the Macau Grand Prix started out as a treasure hunt for local motorists, back in 1954. The event has gone on to add, and remove, different races for different vehicles ever since; it is an ever-evolving highlight of the world's motorsports calendar.

So, if F3's reshuffle happened in 2019, why did the Macau Grand Prix only switch to FR in 2024? This is what *Macao* magazine asked Davide De Gobbi, general manager of Top Speed China, the outfit responsible for supplying FR cars and technical support to the Macau Grand Prix.



A ROUND-UP OF THE RACE WINNERS

RACE	First	Second	Third
FIA FR World Cup	Ugo Ugochukwu	Noel León	Oliver Goethe
FIA GT World Cup	Maro Engel	Augusto Farfus	Sheldon Van Der Linde
Macao Guia Race	Race 1 - Thed Björk	Race 1 - Norbert Michelisz	Race 1 - Mikel Azcona
	Race 2 - Dušan Borković	Race 2 - Esteban Guerrieri	Race 2 - Marco Butti
Macao Motorcycle Grand Prix	Davey Todd	Erno Kostamo	Peter Hickman
Greater Bay Area GT Cup	Han Lichao	Yang Xiaowei	Kevin Tse Wing Kin
Macao SAR Establishment Cup	Damon Chan	Cheang Kin Sang	Ivan Szeto
Macao Roadsport Challenge	Lei Kit Meng	Jerónimo Badaraco	Mou Chi Fai



Wet conditions caused delays and race suspensions during the 2024 Macau Grand Prix

(Opposite page) Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng hands 17-year-old Ugo Ugochukwu his champion's trophy for winning the FIA FR World Cup



German driver Maro Engel put on a show before winning the FIA GT World Cup

(Below) The FR event's only local driver, Tiago Rodrigues, was stymied by a multi-car collision, knocking him out of the race

Xinhua News Agency

According to the motorsports expert, the FIA allowed Macao's grand prix to continue using the F3 banner as something of an experiment. It's important to understand this as a temporary upgrade and not the status quo, De Gobbi emphasises. While the race remained F3 in name for 2019 and 2023 (its highest level races were F4s during the intervening years, due to the Covid-19 pandemic), it had actually jumped from the fourth to third rung of the FIA Global Pathway. That upgrade introduced new, more powerful cars to the Guia Circuit, the equivalent of those that had been raced in the now defunct GP3 class.

Ultimately, Macao's twisty racetrack proved too difficult (and potentially dangerous) for drivers to handle in the higher-spec vehicles. "The cars were just too fast," De Gobbi explains. The federation

decided that it would be best to revert to the Macao Grand Prix's 1983-2018 structure, bringing back what are now classified as FR cars - the ones best suited to the Guia Circuit. This move bumped the race back down to the fourth rung on the Global Pathway.

According to the FIA, the Macao Grand Prix's "unique essence" has always been to bring the top junior drivers from around the world together to compete in a one-off ultimate challenge. "The event has historically been a rite of passage for some of the sport's greatest talents, and the latest chapter of that history will be written in the FIA FR World Cup," it notes on its website. That chapter is now underway, with young drivers like Ugochukwu and Macao-born Rodrigues following in the footsteps of their heroes. The likes of Senna, Schumacher, Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel: F1 drivers who previously raced at this level in Macao. ●

MACAO'S RISING RACER: TIAGO RODRIGUES

Seventeen-year-old Rodrigues has emerged as one of Macao's most promising racing talents in recent years. This year's Grand Prix was his first time moving out of the F4 category, which he competed in on his home track last year, and into FR. While he didn't manage to complete the race due to a multi-car pile-up at the Lisboa Bend, he remains a junior driver to watch.

The teen's passion for motorsports was ignited at the age of 13, during a visit to the home of local racing legend André Couto - best known for winning Macao's F3 Grand Prix in 2000. At Couto's for a birthday party, Rodrigues spotted his hero's racing simulator, a specialised piece of equipment that recreates the experience of driving a real race car, and asked to try it out. "I got addicted right then and there," he tells Macao magazine.

Sensing Rodrigues' determination to master this exhilarating sport, the aspiring

racer's dad soon bought him his own simulator. After five months immersed in virtual racing, in between his classes at the Macao Portuguese School, the then-13-year-old picked up go-karting. He joined Macao's Solar Racing Team and honed his skills during twice-weekly practice sessions at the Coloane Karting Track.

He first got behind the wheel of an F4 racing car in December 2022. You can't legally drive a normal car in Macao until reaching the age of 18, but you can get your racing licence at age 15. As such, Rodrigues spent much of 2023 competing in the F4 Chinese Championship for the Zhuhai-based Champ Motorsport team, along with fellow Macao driver Albert Cheung. He ended up winning that series, though is quick to brush his success off as circumstance. "That year's F4 Chinese Championship was not really that competitive," he says, noting there was only one driver close on his tail.



Image courtesy of Tiago Rodrigues

Immediately after his win in China, Rodrigues embarked on his first Macao Grand Prix. He was racing in the F4 category, which was scrapped this year. Rodrigues' practice session proved chaotic, filled with collisions that prevented him from recording a lap time. As noted already, the Guia Circuit is tricky: "Not crashing in Macao is 90 percent of your focus," Rodrigues laughs. Despite the setbacks, he managed to secure sixth place in the actual F4 race. "From the outside, it may look like winning Chinese F4 was one of my biggest achievements, but actually it was completing the 2023 Macao Grand Prix," Rodrigues insists.

This year saw Rodrigues compete in the F4 UAE Championship, for Dubai's Xcel Motorsport, and in the F4 Australian Championship's international round in Sepang, Malaysia - which he won for the Australian team, Evans GP. Rodrigues says that both events served as important learning experiences leading up to the FIA FR World Cup, in which he also drove for Evans GP.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MACAO GRAND PRIX

- 1954** ○ **The first ever Macao Grand Prix**
The event began as a treasure hunt in sports cars, organised by local businessman Fernando Macedo Pinto. Portuguese driver Eduardo de Carvalho won in a Triumph TR2.
- 1961** ○ **Introduction of Formula Libre**
The race adopted Formula Libre regulations in 1961, opening the Grand Prix up to a variety of car types and amateur drivers.
- 1966** ○ **Professional drivers join the fray**
Belgian Mauro Bianchi is the first professional race car driver to enter the Macao Grand Prix, winning it in his Renault Alpine.
- 1967** ○ **Enter the Macao Motorcycle Grand Prix**
Motorcycles joined the Macao Grand Prix weekend, in a dedicated race for top riders that's now a staple event showcasing global two-wheel talent.
- 1972** ○ **The inaugural Macao Guia Race**
The Guia Macao Race was introduced to bring high-stakes racing in touring cars commonly seen on local roads to the Grand Prix.
- 1974** ○ **The Formula Pacific era begins**
The title race switched to Formula Pacific rules, introducing standardised cars and attracting more international drivers.



British rider Michael Rutter has been competing in Macao for 30 years

- 1983** ○ **Formula 3 is introduced, Ayrton Senna wins**
 Formula 3 regulations replaced Formula Pacific. Brazil's Ayrton Senna won the first F3 Macau Grand Prix, solidifying the race as a platform for future Formula 1 stars.
- 1990** ○ **Michael Schumacher's victory**
 The now-legendary F1 driver Michael Schumacher, from Germany, won Macao's 1990 F3 race
- 1993** ○ **Macau Grand Prix Museum opens**
 A dedicated museum opened to celebrate its namesake event's history and contributions to motorsport.
- 2008** ○ **FIA GT World Cup**
 What's now called the FIA GT World Cup debuted, featuring the world's best GT3 drivers and machines in a battle for international glory.
- 2018** ○ **Greater Bay Area GT Cup**
 A new race launched to highlight motorsport talent and teams from the Greater Bay Area, promoting cross-border collaboration in Chinese motorsports.
- 2021** ○ **Macau Grand Prix Museum Revamp**
 The museum closed for significant upgrades in 2017, reopening in 2021.
- 2024** ○ **Formula Regional replaces Formula 3**
 The Macau Grand Prix's most prestigious race shifts from Formula 3 to Formula Regional, in accordance with a decision by international motorsport's governing body and leading to Macao's inaugural FIA Formula Regional World Cup.



Xinhua News Agency




(Top to bottom)
 Trackside photographers work their cameras to capture the drama of the FR race

Swedish driver Thed Björk of Lynk & Co Cyan Racing pictured celebrating his success in one of two Macau Guia Races

The tightly fought FIA GT World Cup offered spectators plenty of excitement


Ugo Ugochukwu had to contend with a wet track in his FR race




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PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Luso Culture is Thriving in Macao

Performers, exhibitors and chefs from Portuguese-speaking countries and regions around the world converge in Macao come this time of the year, in a multifaceted celebration of all things Luso. From music and art to food and film, the city's end of year cultural festivals always impress.

Text **Sara Santos Silva**

Every Lusofonia, festival-goers flock to the Brazil stall for the country's much-loved sweet treat, brigadeiros

(Opposite page) First held in 1998, Lusofonia Festival is possibly the most highly anticipated Luso-centric event in the city

Even for those well-acquainted with Macao's rich ties to the Portuguese-speaking world, it may come as a surprise to learn that the city plays host to multiple festivals celebrating Lusophone culture in the final months of every year. Macao is not only a natural home for this vibrant, multifaceted heritage, the city serves as a stage that enables it to shine.

Perhaps the most prominent of these celebrations is a series of concerts co-organised by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials IC). First held in 1998, Lusofonia Festival is always a highly anticipated fixture between late October and early November. These days, however, Lusofonia is part of an even bigger cultural extravaganza called Encounter in Macao, currently in its sixth year running. Encounter's programme stretches on into February.

The other significant Lusophone festival that took place was the Cultural Week of China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries, which marked its 16th edition in October. Organised by the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (better known as Forum Macao), a platform established to enhance Sino-Lusophone ties, Cultural Week highlights Macao's role as a bridge between these regions.



Felippe Lopes

A RICH HERITAGE

The term 'Luso' relates to places and communities influenced by Portugal's maritime explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries. It derives from the word 'Lusitania', which was what the Romans called the part of the Iberian Peninsula roughly corresponding to Portugal and parts of Spain. Luso culture is far from singular: it's best described as a common vein running through countries and regions as far-flung as Angola, Brazil, Mozambique and Macao. Today, the Portuguese language continues to connect these diverse cultures, along with

spices like *piri-piri* (from Africa) and cinnamon (from Asia) – which are fundamental to cuisines across the Lusophone world.

Macao's own Macanese culture is a gem within that world; the result of five centuries of Portuguese influence melding with the region's existing Chinese culture. You can see it in European-style architecture of the Historic Centre of Macao (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), taste it in the local gastronomy and hear it in *patuá* theatre, which is performed in the city's Portuguese-Cantonese creole. Portuguese, meanwhile, has remained one of Macao's two official languages.



Cabo Verdean group Ferro Gaita electrified the crowd with their funaná sounds at the Lusofonia Festival on 27 October

(Opposite page) Known for his soulful pop style, Portuguese singer-songwriter Fernando Daniel was one of the headliners in this year's edition of Lusofonia Festival



LUSOFONIA FESTIVAL

Taking place outside the historic Taipa Houses, Lusofonia Festival has been attracting top musical acts from Portuguese-speaking countries for almost three decades. This year was headlined by Portuguese singer-songwriter Fernando Daniel, who performed on 26 October and snapped photographs with an excited audience before his set. The 28-year-old rose to fame after winning the fourth season of *The Voice Portugal*, in 2016, and is known for soulful pop hits like "Melodia da Saudade" (2019) and "Casa" (2023).

The festival's second weekend saw Angolan *kizomba* sensation Yuri da Cunha hit the stage with his country's rhythmic dance music. Kizomba – meaning 'party' in the Kimbundu language – originated in Luanda in the late 1970s, and is generally sung in Portuguese. The genre was officially recognised as part of Angola's intangible cultural heritage earlier this year. Da Cunha's electrifying performance had the Macao crowd up on their feet and dancing as he waved his country's red and black flag with pride.

Daniel and Da Cunha were joined by the Cabo Verdean *funaná* group Ferro Gaita and Mozambican singer-songwriter Selma Uamusse, among other performers. Funaná is a lively style that is intimately associated with the accordion.

Tito Paris, one of the most celebrated Cabo Verdean artists of our time, graced the stage of the Grand Auditorium at the Macao Cultural Centre on 15 November

(Below) The Macao Chinese Orchestra's performance alongside Paris marked a cross-cultural highlight in the programme of the 6th Encounter in Macao

(Opposite page) Encounter's China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival will close with Miguel Gomes' historical drama *Grand Tour*, which earned the filmmaker the Best Director award at Cannes Film Festival



cachupa (a hearty stew made with corn, beans and meat) to Brazil's beloved *brigadeiro* (sweet truffle-like balls that come in a multitude of flavours).

A special spotlight shone on the spice-rich cuisines of India's Goa, Daman and Diu. Chef Vasco Alvares flew all the way from Goa to introduce Lusofonia attendees to his region's signature dishes, including Goan-style octopus stew, chicken *cafreal* (which is marinated in a fragrant herb sauce), stuffed prawns and chicken *xacuti* (a coconut curry).

ENCOUNTER IN MACAO

Beyond Lusofonia Festival, Encounter in Macao offered a rich programme of more than 70 events including a Sino-Portuguese arts exhibition, traditional music and dance performances and a film festival.

Taking place over six days, this was the longest Lusofonia Festival to date. IC President Leong Wai Man has said that the decision to extend the festival gave participating communities "more opportunities for cultural exchange."

Music was not the festival's only drawcard, however. A mouthwatering array of traditional dishes from Portuguese-speaking countries was also on offer, available at food stalls serving up everything from Cabo Verdean

A concert by one of Cabo Verde's most celebrated musicians, Tito Paris, drew an enthusiastic crowd on 15 November at the Macao Cultural Centre's Grand Auditorium. This Encounter event was a cross-cultural collaboration with the celebrated Macao Chinese Orchestra. Paris, with more than four decades of musicianship under his belt, integrates the traditional Cabo Verdean genres *morna* and *funaná* into his performances. Inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, *morna* is a sorrowful musical genre incorporating voice, poetry and dance, often accompanied by violins or guitars.

The Macao Art Museum and the Taipa Houses' Exhibition Gallery are

jointly hosting "Memories, Legacies, Mutations", which features over 130 contemporary works by artists hailing from the mainland, Macao and Portuguese-speaking countries. In addition, the celebrated Brazilian street artist Eduardo Kobra is creating a public artwork live at Rua da Felicidade – a historic street and tourism hotspot in the city's historic centre. Kobra, famed for his massive, colourful murals that adorn the sides of buildings, holds the Guinness World Record for the 'largest spray paint mural by a team' for his work on a chocolate factory in São Paulo, Brazil.

According to IC, the ambitious exhibition aims to "inspire viewers to reflect on the continuity and diversity of cultures." Other featured

artists include João Alexandrino (known as JAS), Manuela Pimentel and Pedro Luz, representing Portugal's buzzing contemporary art scene.

Then there's Encounter's China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival, which is screening around 30 films at cinemas and outdoor venues around the city. The historical drama *Grand Tour*, by Portuguese director Miguel Gomes, is set to close the festival this month. Gomes earned the coveted Best Director award at this year's Cannes Film Festival for the film, which tells the story of a British civil servant who abandons his fiancée on their wedding day to embark on a journey across Asia.



Cultural Week's art exhibition "Lusophone Polychromies" featured artists like Brazilian Luiz Bhering whose nature photography captures a striking play between light and dark

(Below) Portuguese singer Mimicat, who represented Portugal in last year's Eurovision contest, staged two concerts at Fisherman's Wharf as part of Forum Macau's Cultural Week



Sara Santos Silva



Image courtesy of Mimicat's Facebook

CULTURAL WEEK

Forum Macao's Cultural Week also delivered on the music front, with performances by the China Broadcasting Performing Arts Troupe, Equatorial Guinean rapper Negro Bey and Mozambican singer Neyma – who brought groovy *marrabenta* rhythms to Macao. Portuguese pop-and-soul singer Mimicat, who was chosen to represent Portugal in last year's Eurovision contest, also performed two concerts at Fisherman's Wharf on the peninsula.

In addition to the concerts, Cultural Week showcased handicrafts and culinary delights from nine of the forum's member countries: Angola,

Brazil, Cabo Verde, China, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. It saw chefs from around the world travel to Macao for the occasion, to prepare their countries' signature dishes at Vic's Portuguese Restaurant in Rocks Hotel.

The Angolan chef Nario Tala prepared his take on chicken *muamba*, a comforting stew loved for its aromatic sauce, for diners; São Tomé and Príncipe's Maria das Dores whipped up an equally delicious fish stew, called *moqueca* the evening prior. While Macao's famed restaurant scene offers plenty of opportunities to sample Portuguese and Macanese

cuisines, African food is harder to find – making this part of Cultural Week an exciting treat for the city's adventurous foodies.

The "Lusophone Polychromies" art exhibition, held at the Complex of Commerce and Trade Co-operation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, was another highlight. Featuring works by Timor-Leste-born artist Maria Madeira, Brazilian photographer Luiz Bhering and local artist Lam Chi Ian, the exhibition explored themes of identity, culture and heritage.

Through work from her series "Kiss and Don't Tell", Timor Leste-born Madeira – who currently

lives in Australia – shone light on the struggles of voiceless women during the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste. Madeira's Cultural Week exhibition came as her work was being featured in the 2024 Venice Biennale, in Italy. She is the first person from her young country to see their art included in the prestigious international showcase.

Bhering's photographs captured the vibrancy of life in his homeland through images showing crowded Rio de Janeiro beaches and their rolling waves, seemingly frozen in time. Lam's evocative watercolours, meanwhile, added a local touch to the exhibition, bridging Macao with the wider Lusophone world. ●



ARTS & CULTURE

Bridging Cultures: Inside Macao's Newest Museum

The Poly MGM Museum unveiled its inaugural exhibition in November, bringing precious relics, cutting edge technology and an emphasis on cross-cultural dialogue to the city's arts scene.

Text **Amanda Saxton**
and **Sara Santos Silva**

The Poly MGM Museum opened its doors for the first time in early November, with an exhibition centred around the Maritime Silk Road

Macao gained a significant new arts and cultural institution in November, with the opening of the Poly MGM Museum. The museum's stated aim is to promote "Sino-foreign cultural exchange" through displaying art and artefacts from different regions around the world, while highlighting their connections to China. Its inaugural exhibition is themed around the Maritime Silk Road, a historic trade route connecting Asia to the Middle East and Europe by sea.

The spacious new museum is located on Avenida Dr Sun Yat Sen, on the Macao Peninsula. It currently brims with nearly 230 artefacts and artworks from some 20 national museums and galleries, including many grade-one cultural relics. The exhibition was brought together by a curation team hailing from the mainland, Italy and France.

All images on this spread courtesy Poly MGM Museum



HOW THE MUSEUM CAME TO BE

As is suggested in its name, the Poly MGM Museum is a collaboration between Poly Culture Group Corporation (known as Poly Culture) – the arts arm of one of China’s largest state-owned enterprises – and MGM Macau. The two entities inked their ‘Arts & Culture Collaborative Agreement’ last December, in a ceremony attended by officials from both the central and Special Administrative Region (SAR) governments – including Macao’s Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Ao Ieong U and Zhang Hao, director and deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China Committee of Poly Culture.

In his speech, Zhang described Poly Culture and MGM Macau’s partnership as one forged through “a shared passion for the nation and culture.” He noted that the new

museum’s opening would coincide with the 25th anniversary of Macao’s return to the motherland, which takes place on the 20th of this month but has been celebrated throughout the year. Zhang also emphasised Poly Culture’s commitment to promoting Chinese history and culture on a global stage.

Pansy Ho, chairperson and executive director of MGM Macau’s parent company, also spoke at the ceremony. She predicted that the new museum would open a “new chapter in the cultural linkage between the mainland and Macao” while advancing the SAR’s transformation into an international integrated arts and cultural hub. “The art museum carries a shared vision of ‘innovation in inheritance,’ focusing on the in-depth integration of cultural content and technology, creating a brand-new platform for cultural innovation,” she said.

GRADE-ONE CULTURAL RELICS ON DISPLAY

The museum’s inaugural exhibition features several grade-one cultural relics, considered by the Central Government to be irreplaceable treasures that embody the nation’s historical and cultural legacy. Grade-one cultural relics are protected under the strictest of regulations and very seldom leave the country.

Among these are four of the 12 Bronze Zodiac Heads from Beijing’s Old Summer Palace, designed by the Italian Jesuit and court painter Giuseppe Castiglione for Emperor Qianlong. The four animals – an ox, a tiger, a monkey and a pig – now belong to the Poly Art Museum in Beijing.

Meticulously cast in refined red copper at the imperial workshop, the heads represent the cultural and technological exchanges that prospered during Emperor Qianlong’s 60-year reign during the 18th century, according to the museum. Castiglione designed a head for each animal of the Chinese zodiac as part of a clock

fountain in the palace’s grounds; each would have once spouted water from its mouth.

While three other Bronze Zodiac Heads are now on display in other Chinese museums, five of the original 12 have been missing since the entire set was stolen by French and British troops in 1860. It is interesting to note that Pansy Ho’s father, the entrepreneur and philanthropist Stanley Ho, was responsible for returning two of the heads to the nation after purchasing them at auction from overseas collectors. Specifically, these were the pig (currently on display in Macao) and the horse (now permanently displayed back at the Old Summer Palace).

Another grade-one cultural relic featured in the exhibition is a Guangcai plate embellished with hand-painted inscriptions in Farsi. Guangcai is a very fine style of porcelain that was made for export during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), and often fused Chinese artistry with foreign influences. This highly decorative plate is on loan from the collection of China (Hainan) Museum of the South China Sea.

Tradition meets innovation as dynamic LED screens mimic the rich colours and artistic style of the artefacts on display

(Opposite page) Sparkling LED lights recall the Old Summer Palace, taking visitors back in time to where the Bronze Zodiac Heads once stood





THE MARITIME SILK ROAD

The exhibition's primary focus, however, is the Maritime Silk Road and its lasting influence on global cultures. One section explores the development of the compass, which the museum explains is a Chinese invention dating back to the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). This early version of the navigational tool enabled seafarers to "break free from the constraints of the coasts and sail towards even wider and more remote seas", and the technology eventually spread west via the Maritime Silk Road.

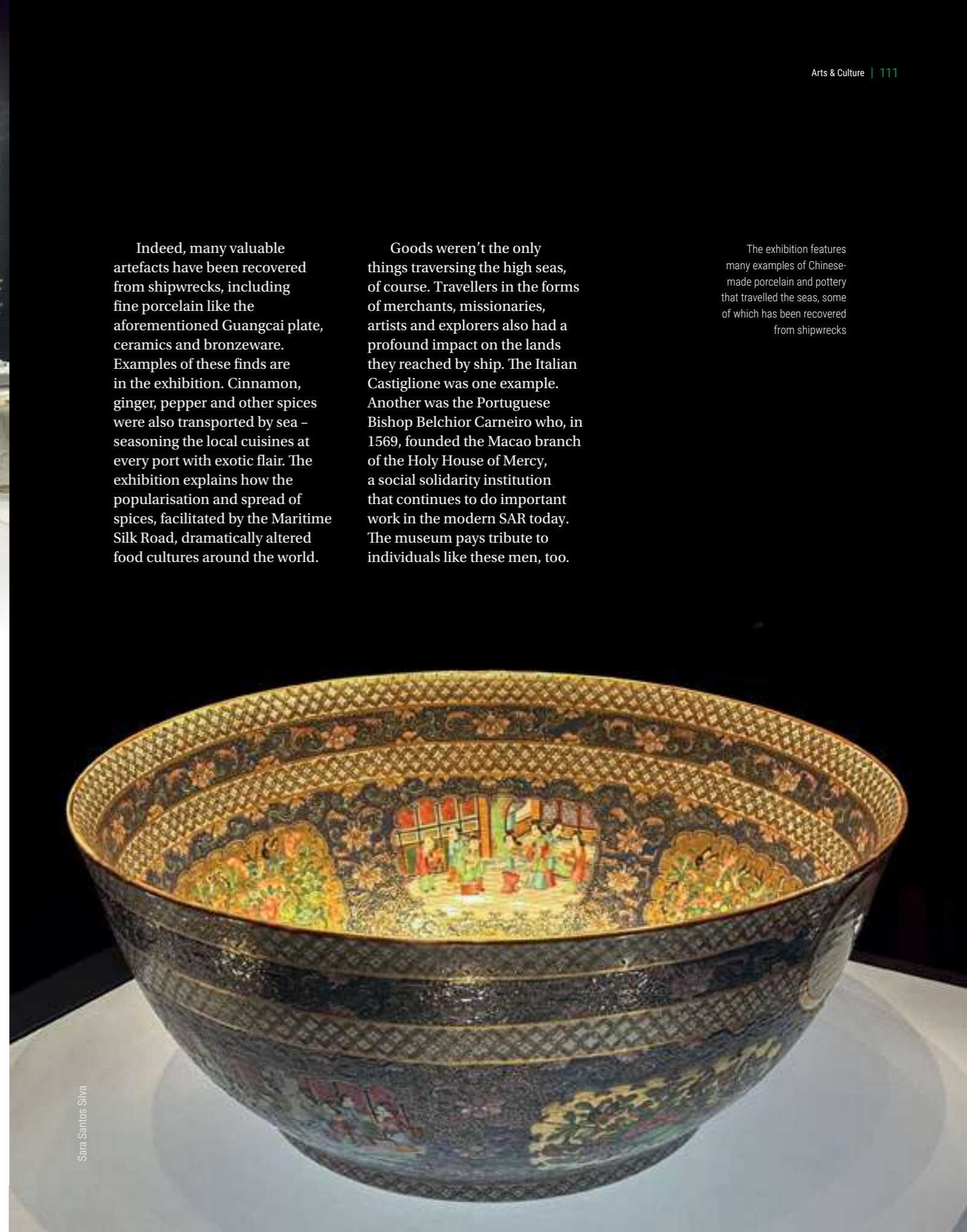
There is also a section dedicated to Macao's early shipbuilding industry, where intricately crafted scale-models are displayed. Visitors

learn how the global expansion of maritime trade saw many different shipbuilding traditions merge together in Macao during the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644), leading to the construction of novel vessels. The museum acknowledges that shipwrecks were a tragic inevitability during this sea-centric chapter of history, though it notes that wrecks – some explored, some still lost to the depths – often function as underwater treasure troves. "Many ancient ships that have been submerged at the bottom of the sea for thousands of years witness the prosperous scenes of overseas transactions in the past and preserve a large number of cultural relics and historical information," the section's accompanying text notes.

Indeed, many valuable artefacts have been recovered from shipwrecks, including fine porcelain like the aforementioned Guangcai plate, ceramics and bronzeware. Examples of these finds are in the exhibition. Cinnamon, ginger, pepper and other spices were also transported by sea – seasoning the local cuisines at every port with exotic flair. The exhibition explains how the popularisation and spread of spices, facilitated by the Maritime Silk Road, dramatically altered food cultures around the world.

Goods weren't the only things traversing the high seas, of course. Travellers in the forms of merchants, missionaries, artists and explorers also had a profound impact on the lands they reached by ship. The Italian Castiglione was one example. Another was the Portuguese Bishop Belchior Carneiro who, in 1569, founded the Macao branch of the Holy House of Mercy, a social solidarity institution that continues to do important work in the modern SAR today. The museum pays tribute to individuals like these men, too.

The exhibition features many examples of Chinese-made porcelain and pottery that travelled the seas, some of which has been recovered from shipwrecks



WHERE HERITAGE MEETS INNOVATION

While the museum features many centuries-old relics, it also embraces cutting-edge technology. Virtual reality and holographic displays bring the exhibits to life, offering visitors a spectacular, interactive experience. The museum also plays host to installations by contemporary artists, like Wu Gaozhong's *Drifting Bottle - 100 Years*. This intriguing piece consists of an enormous glass bottle containing messages scrawled by people all over the world, as though writing to their futures selves. The installation is a time capsule scheduled to be uncorked in the year 2123.

Four of the original 12 Bronze Zodiac Heads from Beijing's Old Summer Palace are on display

(Centre) An imposing green-glazed vase set against the backdrop of a colorful scroll showcasing the world's commercial ports along the Maritime Silk Road

(Opposite page) There is space for modern art installations at the Poly MGM Museum, too – like this oversized 'drift bottle'



From the start, the Poly MGM Museum was intended as a convergence point between East and West, ancient and modern, culture and technology. It aims to “showcase the harmonious integration of Chinese and Western cultures” and demonstrate the profound value of cultural heritage, while further establishing Macao’s position on the global art map – according to a statement from the museum’s founders.

The museum’s debut exhibition will be running until September 2025, with daily guided tours in Cantonese and Mandarin. Tours in other languages can be arranged with advanced notice. ●



HISTORY

The Man Behind the Mandarin's House

The culmination of two decades of dedicated research, a new exhibition at the Mandarin's House examines the life and legacy of the reformist thinker Zheng Guanying. Its location makes this showcase extra meaningful: the exhibition has been staged in the very home where Zheng's influential words took shape.



Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos **Lei Heong Ieong**

A bust of Zheng Guanying, whose writing influenced Mao Zedong

(Opposite page) The Zheng Guanying Memorial Museum is located within the Mandarin's House in Macao

In 2004, Lilian Chan and a team of researchers from the Macao Museum embarked on a journey to explore the life of Zheng Guanying (1842-1921), the successful entrepreneur and one of China's most significant reformist thinkers. Their first port of call was the Macao home of Cheng Chang Pong, one of Zheng's descendants, where he shared an old family photo taken at the Mandarin's House and the prominent family's genealogy book. Both items were later donated to the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government.

The photo depicted a large family in front of a shed that still stands at the Mandarin's House, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Macao's historic centre. Zheng, who is known as Cheng Koon Ying in Cantonese pinyin, is to the right, staring into the camera. The photo is now on display in a permanent exhibition about his life, at the same sprawling residence in which it was taken. This was also where Zheng wrote his masterpiece, *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age*, which went on to influence great Chinese leaders like Mao Zedong and Sun Yat-Sen after being published in the mid-1890s.

It was Cheng's genealogy book that excited Chan most, however. "It felt so strange and marvellous to read," she tells *Macao* magazine. "In the book, we discovered Zheng's given name was originally Zhangying [Cheong Ying in Cantonese], not Guanying [Koon Ying in Cantonese]. Nobody knew about it."

With the help of donations, the team deepened their research. They travelled to Zheng's birthplace, Xiangshan (now Zhongshan), and to Shanghai, where Zheng spent much of his life after being sent there to work with an uncle at the age of 16. During the researchers' journey, they forged close partnerships with institutions like the Shanghai Library and the Shanghai Audio-visual Archives. They also connected with more of Zheng's descendants, both in Macao and abroad.

In September of this year, the team's two decades of research culminated in the "Exhibition of the Legacy of Zheng Guanying" at the Zheng Guanying Memorial Museum, located within the Mandarin's House. The three-storey museum displays over 100 items in its Zheng exhibition, including writings, documents, letters, photographs, plaques and couplets. These reveal important insights into Zheng's far-reaching influence on commerce, governance and social reform. The exhibition, which was inaugurated in late September, is being displayed permanently at Zheng's namesake museum.



Lilian Chan and her team spent decades researching Zheng Guanying

THE SOUL OF A MANSION

The earliest iteration of the Mandarin's House was built in 1869, by Zheng's father, on the Macao Peninsula's Travessa de António da Silva. The compound underwent many extensions and alterations over the following decades, transforming it into a multigenerational mansion. The

structure was primarily built in a Lingnan style typical of southern China, but also features subtle Western influences.

The Macao SAR Government acquired the Mandarin's House in 2001, after the remaining family members and tenants had moved out. It then embarked on a painstaking restoration scheme with the aim of returning the run-down complex to

its former glory. In 2005, UNESCO deemed the Mandarin's House worthy of World Heritage status. In 2010, it was finally ready to open its doors to the public. The compound's walled gardens and courtyards, elaborate interior frescoes, shrine to an earth god and exquisitely carved screen doors can now be explored by anyone seeking a serene escape from the city's bustle.



An old photograph shows Zheng Guanying (fourth from right in front row) outside the Mandarin's House



The government spent nearly a decade painstakingly restoring the Mandarin's House before it was opened to the public in 2010

(Opposite page) Framed letters from entities Zheng Guanying worked for, praising his achievements

While the Mandarin's House is important architecturally, the people who lived there – like Zheng – add much to its intrigue. As Chan puts it, a building's inhabitants lend it its “soul”. She and her team have staged three exhibitions about Zheng to date, though the current one is the most comprehensive. The fact it is being held inside the thinker's own home makes this exhibition especially impactful. “The mansion is like a body,” she says. “But what's most important is its soul. That's why we want to reveal what Zheng achieved in history, and how he influenced the world. We want to show the mansion's soul to our audience.”

AN INSPIRATION TO THE GREATS

The first part of the exhibition concerns Zheng's connections to three historical figures profoundly influenced by his book, *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age*: Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Emperor Guangxu (1871-1908) and Mao Zedong (1893-1976).

Sun Yat-sen, the revolutionary leader who overthrew the Qing dynasty, drew inspiration from Zheng's ideas on reform and modernisation. Emperor Guangxu was so impressed by the book that he ordered 2,000 copies to be distributed among his ministers. Mao, meanwhile, credited *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age* with shaping his policies on industrialisation.

The first exhibit in this section is a replica of a letter Zheng wrote to the Chinese politician Sheng Xuanhuai in 1894. In it, he expressed his hope that Sheng would recommend Sun Yat-sen, then a young revolutionary, to Qing Viceroy Li Hongzhang – an advocate for modernisation and a key figure in China's Self-Strengthening Movement. Zheng was trying to help Sun secure a passport so he could travel overseas. History tells us that while Sun did get his passport, he didn't manage to meet Li. He did, however, write a lengthy petition to the viceroy presenting his own ideas for China's modernisation. Zheng's original letter from this period is housed in the Shanghai Library.

Visitors can also view the replica of a note written by Mao Zedong to his cousin, Wen Yunchang, in 1915. The man who would go on to found the People's Republic of China was a student at the time, and mentions *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age* to his cousin. In a later autobiography, Mao acknowledged Zheng's writing had a profound influence on him.

A MAN OF COMMERCE AND ADVENTURE

On the second floor, visitors learn about Zheng's spectacular career in commerce. As a teenager in Shanghai, Zheng picked up English and enrolled in evening

classes at the Anglo-Chinese School. After just one year in the city, he began working for Butterfield & Swire (now Swire Group), a major British trading firm with offices in Shanghai. He eventually established branches of the company – which specialised in Chinese tea and silk at the time – in Jiangxi and Fujian provinces, and was an early investor in the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company, established by the Qing government to challenge the foreign firms dominating China's import and export business. Founded in 1872, the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company still operates today as the state-owned enterprise China Merchants Group.



The museum contains a wide range of exhibits, including an excerpt of the book, *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age*, a carved wooden plaque thanking Zheng Guanying for his kindness, and digital displays

In 1880, Zheng was appointed to manage the Shanghai Machinery and Weaving Bureau along with the Shanghai Telegraph Bureau. Parts of the exhibition are dedicated to showcasing Zheng's leadership roles and achievements across these entities, as well as with the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company. The exhibition offers interactive activities, too. There's a machine

where children can learn how to send a telegraph using Morse code, as well as a digitised map letting visitors to trace Zheng's travels across China, as they are recorded in his *Yangtze River Diary*. The book chronicles a lengthy trip from Shanghai to Chongqing along the Yangtze River, during which Zheng examined his multifaceted business interests.

A LEGACY OF BENEVOLENCE

Also featured in the exhibition is a large plaque featuring the characters “崇德厚施”, or “Promote Virtue and Practice Generosity” in English. The plaque was a gift from Zeng Guoquan, a provincial governor of Shanxi Province whom Zheng helped out during the devastating drought of the late 1870s – using his influence to encourage individuals and organisations to donate to disaster relief. “Zheng helped Zeng manage the crisis and appease the public,” Chan explains.

In his later life, Zheng devoted himself to education. He was chairman of a public school founded by the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company in Shanghai and honorary director of the Shanghai Commercial Middle School.

RETIREMENT AND WRITING

When Zheng took a step back from his commercial positions in the mid-1880s, he returned to Macao to live in the home his father had built: the Mandarin's House. The change in pace allowed him to concentrate on further developing his reformist ideas, and to write.

In *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age*, Zheng reflects on his experiences as both a businessman and an observer of the declining Qing dynasty, which was confronted by aggressive foreign powers. The book managed to capture the zeitgeist, putting forth bold recommendations on how to reform China's leadership, education, infrastructure and medical systems.

Zheng didn't spend the rest of his life in Macao (in fact, he died in Shanghai), but a number of his family members remained in the Mandarin's House for decades after he had gone. The exhibition includes a hand-drawn floorplan from the 1950s that shows how the space was divided to accommodate its many occupants, which included non-family member tenants.

Now that the compound has been restored to its original splendour, visitors are able to step into the world of Zheng Guanying. Through its permanent exhibition, thanks to the hard work of Chan's team of researchers, they will also gain a unique sense of the remarkable man's legacy. ●



The relatively short stature, walled courtyard and gardens of the Mandarin's House clearly mark it as a piece of a bygone era

All images on this page courtesy Macao Museum





ARTS & CULTURE

Tiny Canvases Make a Big Impact

In celebration of the Macao Special Administrative Region's 25th anniversary, a new exhibition is showcasing over 100 stamp designs by nine renowned Macao artists – bringing the city's cultural legacy to life in a format where art, history and function overlap.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**

Titled *Shared Prosperity Across the Coastline*, this watercolour by Lam Chi Ian featured in a postage stamp this year and is a highlight of Sands Gallery's exhibition

(Opposite page) Stamp artist Lam Chi Ian curated "Echoes of a Golden Age" for Sands Gallery

At first glance, postage stamps may seem like everyday objects: small, functional and often overlooked. A closer examination of philatelic products, however, reveals these two-by-three centimetre sticky rectangles as miniature canvases that hold intricate, meaningful art. Macao's stamps are celebrated and valued; each one produced for the Special Administrative Region (SAR) bears its designer's name alongside an image that captures a little something of the city's character.

To mark the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland,

Sands Gallery has brought together nine acclaimed local stamp designers for an exhibition titled, "Echoes of a Golden Age: Macro Events through the Micro Visions of Macao's Legendary Contemporary Artists". The art on display – more than 120 pieces – was mostly featured on stamps printed between 1999 and 2024. They depict landmarks and landscapes, historical milestones and iconic events in a myriad of styles, from watercolour to photography. According to the gallery, "Echoes of a Golden Age" celebrates "Macao's prosperity and patriotism since reunification".

Of course, exhibition goers will not find themselves surrounded by tiny postage stamps, needing magnifying glasses to appreciate the artwork. Rather, the experience is akin to stepping into a gallery displaying large-scale paintings, drawings, photography and other mediums – because that's exactly what the exhibition is. After receiving their instructions from the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials CTT), each artist is free to create their stamp art using the same processes they would for a piece intended to hang on a wall. It's these originals you'll find at the gallery, alongside their philatelic counterparts.

The CTT oversees the SAR's stamp production, assigning themes annually and commissioning artists to develop their own designs. The Chinese zodiac has been an enduring theme in Macao; others have included local flora and noteworthy schools. While stamp making does follow a protocol, each design is imbued with its artist's individual style and offers a glimpse into their personal perspective on Macao.

The exhibition's curator, Lam Chi Ian, is himself a designer. "It's truly an honour to be a stamp artist, as your work gets to be featured on posts delivered worldwide," he tells *Macao* magazine. "These stamps are 100 percent made in Macao, and are tied to the city's development since its return to the motherland."

The exhibition presents an eclectic range of artistic styles, and each exhibitor is a prominent figure within Macao's arts scene. Lok Hei, for instance, serves on the Cultural Development Consultative Committee and is a national committee member of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. Ung Vai Meng, another contributor, was the first director of the Macao Museum of Art. Others apply their creative skills to current roles, such as designer Ao Kuan Kin, who works for the Macao Statistics and Census Service, and the esteemed photographer Chan Hin Io, director of the Macau Image Gallery at the Macao University of Science and Technology.

Several artists, including Lai Ieng and Ng Wai Kin, have been awarded Medals of Merit by the government for their cultural contributions,

and most have exhibited widely in Macao and abroad. *Macao* magazine spoke with three of the group about their journeys in stamp design: curator Lam, veteran watercolourist Lio Man Cheong and the renowned Chinese ink master Lei Tak Seng.

LAM CHI IAN: THE CURATOR

Born in Macao but raised in Canada, Lam has spent most of his career in the advertising industry. His major break in the stamp realm came when he was commissioned to design Chinese zodiac stamps for CTT's 2008-2019 series, and opted to incorporate the five elements, or *wu xing* (earth, water, fire, metal and wind) into his work. Lam's watercolours are executed with a bold palette and dream-like quality that's particularly evident in his 2024 work, *Shared Prosperity Across the Coastline*. This beautifully-hued landscape depicts urban Macao in front of a mountainous mainland.

Lam, based back in Macao since 2009, was the first Macao artist to design a stamp for Canada Post, creating a 2010 commemorative piece for the Year of the Golden Tiger. He has since produced over 80 stamps for both Canada Post and CTT. Lam is leading CTT's current zodiac series, which launched in 2020, and is a collaboration with five other artists. His design for the Year of the Dragon appears in "Echoes of a Golden Age".



A multiple award-winning designer, Lam is the founding president of the Macao Contemporary Watercolour Artists Association and the executive director of the Yu Un Chinese Calligraphers and Painters Association of Macao.

LIO MAN CHEONG: THE VETERAN

Lio is one of the best-known artists in the exhibition, having shown his work extensively both in Macao and abroad since the 1970s. His journey in stamp design began in 1991, when he won a CTT competition with his illustration of the Eight Immortals from Chinese mythology. Since then, Lio has been a regular CTT designer.

Now in his 70s, Lio remains a very active artist. He has painted numerous local landmarks and industries to be featured on stamps, including illustrations of now-defunct fireworks factories. One of his favourite stamp designs, which is on display in the show, is titled *Ways of Life - Tricycle Drivers*. This image depicts once-common tricycle drivers against a backdrop of Portuguese-style cobblestone streets. Tricycles, also known as rickshaws,



used to be a popular choice for tourists on sight-seeing jaunts around Macao.

“When planning the composition, I aimed to include elements closely associated with the city,” Lio says, “and added a bit of cartoonish flair.”

Lio’s background in painting cinema posters in the 1980s and 1990s influences his stamp designs, where he combines realism with a touch of whimsy. His creative process incorporates various media, including oil, watercolours and ink.

Lio Man Cheong’s 2024 oil painting *Macao Story* depicts noteworthy people from different chapters of Macao’s history

(Right) Lio Man Cheong pictured at work in his studio



LEI TAK SENG: THE INK MASTER

Lei, a master of Chinese ink art, has worked as a stamp designer since the mid-2010s. His 2021 Year of the Ox stamp artwork is in the exhibition, as well as *Scroll of Macao* (2014) and *Lotus Flower* (2017).

While ink is Lei’s primary medium, he sometimes combines it with other genres to add vibrancy. “I’m often asked to create richly colourful scenes,” he explains, “so I integrate watercolours into some designs.” *Scroll of Macao* is a visual feast that blends traditional Chinese techniques with subtle splashes of colour to depict beloved local landmarks like the Ruins of St Paul. In *Lotus Flower*, Lei uses ink alone to convey simplicity and purity.

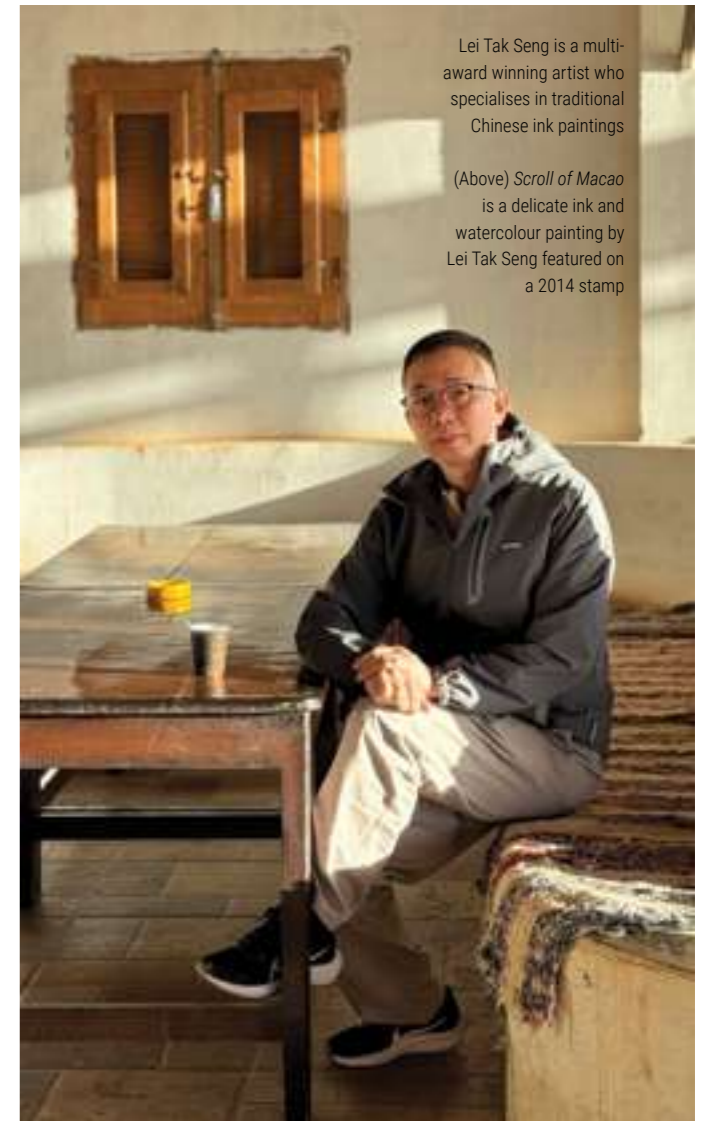
Lei is a five-time winner of the Collective Exhibition of Macao Artists’ Best Work award and has twice won its Best Creation Special Prize. His works are part of collections in museums across Macao and the mainland.

This exhibition aims to show how stamp design goes beyond decoration in the SAR: it’s the intersection of art, history and culture.

“*Echoes of a Golden Age: Macro Events through the Micro Visions of Macao’s Legendary Contemporary Artists*” is showing at Sands Gallery until 5 January. Entry is free. ●

Lei Tak Seng is a multi-award winning artist who specialises in traditional Chinese ink paintings

(Above) *Scroll of Macao* is a delicate ink and watercolour painting by Lei Tak Seng featured on a 2014 stamp



FOOD & DRINK

Casa Maquista: Reinventing the Macanese Kitchen

The newly opened Casa Maquista offers an array of traditional dishes that encapsulate Macao's rich gastronomic history, served up with love in a heritage home.



Text **Christopher Chu**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

Casa Maquista occupies a historic home in Taipa

(Opposite page) Capela is a Macanese meatloaf containing Iberico pork, smoked sausage, black olives and pine nuts



One of Taipa's century-old, turquoise-coloured homes has taken on a new life as Casa Maquista, a restaurant that goes further than most when it comes to authentic Macanese cuisine. The space, originally a residence for senior civil servants and more recently known as the House for Receptions, retains much of its original charm – with period decor complementing the kitchen's family-style meals. In this way, Casa Maquista reconnects the building with its own history while inviting a wider audience to experience a uniquely Macanese way of life.

The new eatery's menu is managed by executive chefs Pedro and Mauro Almeida, who are brothers from northern Portugal. While the Almeidas' other establishments focus on Portuguese classics like *bacalhau à brás* (salted cod with potato and scrambled eggs) and *arroz de marisco* (seafood rice stew), Casa Maquista is dedicated to sharing Macanese specialities best enjoyed with family and friends. The likes of *porco bafassá* (turmeric-laden Iberico pork), *vaca chau chau parida* (stir-fried beef with ginger and port wine) and *caril de camarão com quiabos* (shrimp curry with okra).

Pedro Almeida tells *Macao* magazine that it took a lot of “detective work” to settle on what, exactly, should be served at Casa Maquista. “There’s a bit of trial-and-error and imagination that goes into executing our dishes, especially when comparing the resources available now to what was around back then.”

His brother, Mauro Almeida, adds that “hundreds of tests” went into finalising their menu.

DEFINING MACANESE FLAVOUR

One of Casa Maquista’s co-founders is a restaurateur named Asai, who prefers to go by his

first name only. Asai explains that it is quite common to find Portuguese and Macanese dishes served simultaneously at restaurants in Macao. Asai worries that this gives patrons the impression that the two cuisines are one and the same when really they are remarkably distinct.

Chef Mauro Almeida

A CULINARY CHALLENGE

Crafting Casa Maquista’s menu was no easy task. While Macanese cookbooks do exist, recipes within this community are rarely shared beyond immediate family circles: they tend to be transmitted to younger generations verbally, within the confines of private kitchens. Some of the best home cooks even take their signature recipes with them to the grave, says Annabel Jackson, author of *The Making of Macau’s Fusion Cuisine: From Family Table to World Stage*.

According to Jackson, Macanese dishes are tightly intertwined with personal identity and family heritage. “No one would ever say that someone else’s recipe is better than their own family’s concoction,” she notes. And even if you do have a written recipe, the dynamic nature of Macanese dishes make them difficult to conceptualise as a standardised product. Then there’s the fact that these older recipes often use outdated measurements and equipment, making them tricky to replicate. Eggs, for example, are larger today than they were half a century ago, meaning fewer are needed in modern adaptations. Contemporary stoves and ovens can also influence the cooking process in ways that previous generations would not have been familiar with.





Casa Maquista's walls display photographs of the building's past residents

(Opposite page) Lorcha margosa is a bitter melon stuffed with Iberico pork

While Portugal's coast is Atlantic, the country's pork and seafood centric-food is heavily influenced by the Mediterranean, largely thanks to the Roman occupation of the Iberian Peninsula more than 2,000 years ago. Macanese cuisine, on the other hand, has a far more exotic range of influences that started merging around 500 years ago. It dates back to the Age of Discovery, when Portuguese explorers set sail around Africa's coastline to reach

Goa, Malacca and eventually Macao, adapting their native culinary instincts to new ingredients and techniques encountered along the way. Macanese food blends the Portuguese's passion for salted cod and port wine with Southeast Asian ingredients like turmeric, coconut milk and shrimp paste; spices from Africa and India; plus that southern Chinese staple, soy sauce.

Jackson, the cookbook author, understands Asai's concerns. But she

also believes that confusion around the two cuisines is likely inevitable, saying it reflects "the depth of Macao's cultural and culinary diversity". Jackson points to the ubiquitous egg tart as an example of this in action. In Macao, the term 'egg tart' can refer to any of three distinct confections: the Chinese *dantat*, the Portuguese *pastel de nata* and a local invention served at the iconic Lord Stow's Bakery. The last, perhaps the city's most sought-after,



was created by an Englishman in the late 1980s.

Cited as one of the world's first fusion cuisines, Macanese gastronomy is classified as part of Macao's intangible heritage by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (known by its Portuguese initials, IC). On the international stage, UNESCO designated Macao a "Creative City of Gastronomy" in 2018, in recognition of the city's unique blend of Eastern and Western flavours.



A HOME FOR HISTORY

The building that houses Casa Maquista holds heritage value itself. It is one of the five Taipa Houses, a striking row of Portuguese neoclassical-style villas along Avenida da Praia, built in 1921. Now managed by IC, these buildings were first opened to the public in 1999 for the purpose of showcasing life in early 20th-century Macao. Casa Maquista – with its traditional food, antique furniture and Portuguese crockery collection displayed on its walls – fits this remit perfectly. It currently

rubs shoulders with a museum, a bookshop and two galleries.

Since opening its doors in early June, the restaurant has been welcoming not only guests, but also the memories of the area's former inhabitants, says Ricardo Balocas, general manager of the restaurant. "I periodically receive phone calls thinking it is a customer looking to make a table booking, but before I can even say anything, the person on the line says, 'Hi, I used to live or work in your restaurant,' then follows it up with an elaborate and personal story," he explains. Balocas sees these anecdotes as testament

The veranda of Casa Maquista looks out on the other Taipa Houses

(Opposite page) An appetizer tower featuring chilicote (turmeric dumplings) and tosta de queijo (cheese toast), along with other traditional bites

to the Taipa Houses' strong cultural resonance within Macao.

Among those who have reached out include Gastão Humberto Barros Jr, whose family lived in Casa Maquista's building in the early 1960s – when his father served as the deputy mayor for the Taipa and Coloane islands. Barros has shared numerous old photographs with Balocas, including pictures taken inside the home during family dinners and formal banquets. These are now on display at the restaurant.

Like those photographs, the area adjacent to the Taipa Houses appears almost frozen in time. Above the turquoise-coloured former residences is the yellow exterior of Our Lady of Carmel Church, built in the late 19th century, along with a former school building currently serving as the marriage registry for Taipa. And yet, just beyond the now enclosed lake, the skyline reveals that time has marched forward. Towering integrated resorts have replaced what was once the waterway between Taipa and Coloane, a striking contrast to the quaint old neighbourhood below.

Though the evening sky now glows with neon lights, strolling past the Taipa Houses feels like stepping into history. And as old memories return to Casa Maquista, new ones are created every day, adding a fresh chapter to Macao's rich and evolving gastronomic story. ●





FOOD & DRINK

Macao's *Cha Chaan Tengs* are Changing with the Times

Amid Macao's world famous fine dining scene, a less glamorous but deeply beloved option thrives: the *cha chaan teng*. Traditionally no-frills cafés offering budget-friendly comfort food, a new wave of tea restaurants is developing – still serving up nostalgia, but packaged for the modern age.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

Ma Hing Hong has been run by the same family for almost a century in Macao

In the early hours of every morning, Shirley Ma and her sisters start their day in the kitchen of Ma Hing Hong, a cha chaan teng located along Macao Peninsula's Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira. By 7 am, the café is ready to welcome its regulars, each one eager for their morning fix – be that scrambled egg sandwiches, French toast with peanut butter or perhaps a noodle soup. Milk tea is a popular accompaniment (cha chaan teng means 'tea restaurant' in Cantonese, after all), but many diners opt to mix their tea with coffee, the result of which

is dubbed *yuenyeung*. It's one of the cha chaan teng genre's more idiosyncratic beverages.

Founded in 1926, Ma Hing Hong is possibly the oldest tea restaurant in Macao. In fact, this eatery pre-dates the cha chaan teng concept, which emerged in post-World War II Hong Kong. For as long as anyone can remember, however, Ma Hing Hong has embodied the spirit of what it means to be a cha chaan teng: affordable, efficient and eclectic, with a laid-back vibe that invites cheerful chit-chat between customers.



WHAT IS A CHA CHAAN TENG?

For the uninitiated, these humble eateries can inspire comparisons with the UK's 'greasy spoon' cafés or American diners. Expect an unpretentious, often retro atmosphere, though not necessarily by design. Many cha chaan teng owners simply haven't bothered to alter their eateries' interiors (or menus) in decades – and therein lies

a lot of their charm. They're consistent, invoking a strong sense of nostalgia for simpler times.

Cha chaan tengs are most closely associated with Hong Kong. You can find so-called Hong Kong diners around the world, in cities with large southern Chinese diasporas. Their Macao counterparts may be less well known outside of the city, but cha chaan tengs are equally omnipresent in the smaller

Special Administrative Region (SAR).

The fare served in these distinctive eateries reflects the East-meets-West fusion that characterises both Hong Kong and Macao's multicultural histories. Take toasted white bread with butter, a staple you're unlikely to find in any other type of restaurant in China. Or the aforementioned tea-and-coffee mixture – that's something you certainly wouldn't order in a European café.

Even standard tea served in tea restaurants is distinct; a far cry from the delicate oolong and jasmine infusions sipped in traditional mainland tea houses. Hong Kong-style milk tea – as it's known – is a strong brew of black tea leaves, with evaporated or condensed milk stirred in for a creamy profile that can be quite sweet. Hong Kong's government officially recognises this tea format as part of Hong Kong's intangible cultural heritage, and it's also become a firm favourite in Macao.

Another classic cha chaan teng offering is known as French toast, though you won't find it in Paris. Picture a peanut butter sandwich dipped in egg, fried and then drizzled with condensed milk. Other staples include macaroni in broth with luncheon meat, pork chops over rice, and pineapple buns for something sweet. While cha chaan teng menus in the two SARs are similar, Macao's tend to feature something extra: Portuguese-influenced and Macanese dishes. Think tinned sardines, Macao-style chicken pilau and minced pork with potatoes (a Macanese concoction called *minchi*). Make no mistake, comfort food reigns supreme.

Most cha chaan tengs offer set meals that come with a beverage. Take your pick of milk tea, yuenyeung, powdered coffee, malted milk, red bean ice or a fizzy drink with ice cream.

While tea restaurants started out as a budget-friendly option for blue collar workers on breaks from their factory jobs, they've since been embraced by all strata of society. The sheer number of these eateries scattered across Macao is testament to their popularity. Some seem almost like neighbourhood living rooms, packed with locals taking a moment to read the newspaper, have a cup of tea and wolf down an omelette before work – often sharing tables during busy periods.

Like Ma Hing Hong, Café Rosa is one of these vital neighbourhood venues. Located near the Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel on Macao Peninsula, this cha chaan teng is bright and bustling. Its colourful walls are complemented by lively conversations between people of all ages, exchanging their news and cracking jokes over breakfast. You can see the same rituals taking place in cha chaan tengs around the city every morning.

A breakfast set at Café Rosa: instant noodles and a mug of milk tea

(Opposite page) The Ma sisters with their father enjoying a cup of tea at their cha chaan teng





Café Rosa is a beloved community hub where locals often read newspapers in the mornings, over tea

(Opposite page) The decor of Macau Chadong aims to invoke nostalgia

MA HING HONG: A FAMILY LEGACY

Ma Hing Hong, meanwhile, has seen multiple generations pack into its cream-coloured booths for breakfast and lunch over the decades. The café has been at its current location since 1987, when it shifted north from Largo do São Domingos, in the heart of Macao's historic district. Shirley Ma's grandfather, a native of Guangdong, founded the original eatery, and she says that some older customers still ask, "Is this the same Ma Hing Hong from Largo do São Domingos?"

Now in her early fifties, Ma fondly recalls the café's first iteration, having helped out there as a teenager alongside her five siblings. "I remember rushing between the café and my school in Ilha Verde during lunch hours," she tells *Macao* magazine. At some point before Ma Hing Hong moved to Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira, her father, Ma Chong Wan, took over. When the workload became too much for him, in 2006, Ma and three of her sisters became the third generation to run the place. But their dad is still involved in the eatery that his dad founded: even now, in his seventies, the senior Ma enjoys manning the till.

As is typical for a cha chaan teng, Ma Hing Hong's unassuming exterior belies the warmth inside. White-tiled walls (easy to clean) are adorned with photos of menu items, while kitschy figurines stand proudly on a shelf behind the counter. Traditional Chinese art and calligraphy, the latter dating back to Ma's grandfather's time, are positioned above the cosy booths. You'll often find a queue outside Ma Hing Hong at lunch time, when *char siu* pork over rice with a runny egg is in hot demand. Each of Macao's cha chaan tengs has something it does just a little better than the rest and at Ma Hing Hong, Ma believes it's their homemade *char siu* sauce. She says it's "very different from what you find anywhere else."

THE NEW WAVE OF CHA CHAAN TENGs

In recent years, contemporary iterations of cha chaan tengs have sprung up across Macao, injecting new energy into this beloved tradition. One standout is Macau Chadong, which now has three branches across the city – two in Taipa, one on the Macao Peninsula near Lou Lim Ioc Garden.

Unlike Ma Hing Hong and Café Rosa, Macau Chadong's decor *has* been curated to evoke nostalgia. Retro lamps, old-school games and replicas of vintage shop fronts transport diners back to the streets of 1980s Ilha Verde, the childhood neighbourhood of the eatery's founder Capton Lam, who designed the cha chaan tengs' interiors as an ode to the era he grew up in.

The concept is proving to be very popular, especially among younger patrons, Lam says. The policeman-turned-restaurateur opened the first Macau Chadong in Old Taipa Village in late 2019, following the success of a takeaway version. The flagship café's centrepiece is an old-fashioned soda cart, reminiscent of those from where Lam bought fizzy drinks as a child. A corner of the eatery mimics the barber shop where his father once worked, complete with an old standing hair dryer and vintage hair curlers.

Macao Chadong's playfulness extends to its menu. Lam has created his own version of the classic ice cream soda, which is typically either Coca-Cola with a dollop of chocolate ice cream (dubbed the 'black bull') or Sprite with vanilla ice cream (a 'white bull'). Lam's invention combines iced milk tea with milk-tea-flavoured sorbet, a concoction he's christened the 'Macao bull'.



Capton Lam designs the interiors and menus of Macau Chadong himself



▶ SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

He also likes to pay homage to local culture through the names he gives dishes. Two meaty options go by Tai Sei Hei and Tai Sam Yuen, which refer to high-scoring hands in mah-jong (heralding the food's excellence, Lam explains). Then there's the Sorrowful Rice, Lam's version of char sui pork on white rice with a gooey egg. Sorrowful Rice is a dish in the 1996 Hong Kong film *The God of Cookery*, directed by Stephen Chow and Lee Lik-chi.

Macau Chadong's balance of nostalgia and modernity is clearly striking a chord with diners. "When

customers chat with us and tell us what they love about the place, it's incredibly rewarding," Lam says. He adds that his customers enjoy photographing themselves with props like the hair curlers, then posting the results to social media.

PRESERVING THE PAST, EMBRACING THE FUTURE

Over their seven-plus decades of history, the tea restaurant has become one of Macao's most enduring culinary institutions. While long-established spots like Ma Hing Hong

and Café Rosa continue to honour the classic recipes and atmosphere that have made them iconic, entrepreneurs like Lam are infusing their traditions with fresh ideas.

Whether you visit an old-school cha chaan teng or one of the contemporary Macau Chadongs, you're in for a transportive experience. For locals, these eateries offer a sense of continuity and community, shared over comfort food. For visitors, tea restaurants provide an authentic taste of Macao's foodie culture – rooted in history yet always evolving. ●

ZOOM

Through the Lens: Vernacular Architecture in the Greater Bay Area

A recent photography competition organised by a local creative platform saw photographers Eduardo Leal, Jingyi Xu and Ji Xiang win their respective categories. Each of their photographs captures a compelling slice of the region's uniquely multifaceted architectural identity.

Macao-based Portuguese photojournalist Eduardo Leal won his category, the Macau Open, with this image highlighting the intricate details of an old building in the Patane area of Macao Peninsula. His piece captures the striking interplay between light and shadow, enriched by vibrant hues of yellow and red





Text **Sara Santos Silva**
Photos courtesy of **CURB**

① A night-time scene of a residential complex under development in Zone A of the Macau New Urban Zone is the subject of this photograph, which earned Chon Ka Hou second place in the Macau Open category

To honour the distinctive vernacular architecture that defines the region, Macao's Centre for Architecture and Urbanism (CURB) recently hosted a photography competition titled Treasures of the Greater Bay. CURB called on professional photographers and enthusiasts to capture urban sites across the nine cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) – Dongguan, Foshan, Guangzhou, Huizhou, Jiangmen, Shenzhen, Zhaoqing,

Zhongshan and Zhuhai – as well as the two Special Administrative Regions, Macao and Hong Kong.

Vernacular architecture refers to structures built to meet local needs, using regional resources and traditions, rather than adhering to a specific genre. While these buildings often reflect influences from well-known styles, like Modernism, they remain rooted in the communities they serve – both shaping and being shaped the everyday lives of those around them.

The competition attracted 157 participants, who submitted nearly 400 photographs between them. A panel of expert judges led by renowned architectural photographer Ines Leong then evaluated the entries based on artistic merit, technical skill and originality. At Treasures of the

Greater Bay's awards ceremony, held in late September at CURB's Inner Harbour headquarters, Eduardo Leal and Jingyi Xu were recognised as the top photographers in the Macau Open and Macau Student categories, respectively, while Ji Xiang claimed the top prize in the GBA Open category. ●

② Macao peninsula's Avenida de Horta e Costa was captured during an unusually calm moment by Hong Keng Sio, who came third in the competition's Macau Open category. The pinkish hue of the sky at dusk appears reflected on the facade of these apartment blocks' balconies





③ Chinese calligraphy inscribed on a piece of white cloth catches the eye in this light-versus-dark photo, captured by Jingyi Xu to win the Macau Student category



④ A juxtaposition of old and new is depicted in a residential area nestled in the shadows of the majestic Canton Tower in Guangzhou in this photograph by leong Ka Meng, who secured 2nd place in the Macau Student Group category

⑤ The intricate details of Chinese aesthetics shine in this trichromatic photograph by Lyu Hong Hao taken in Foshan's Fengjian Canal town. The image earned Hao the third place in the Macau Student Group category



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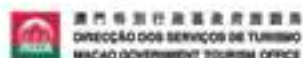
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