

Macao 澳門

President Xi Jinping in Macao



**SAM HOU FAI SWORN IN AS
MACAO'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**EMPEROR QIANLONG'S PALACE
OF DOUBLE BRILLIANCE**



25/26

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COVER IMAGE

President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, receive a red carpet welcome from Macao - Photo by Xinhua News Agency

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The "Palace of Double Brilliance" is a collaborative exhibition between the Macao Museum of Art and Beijing's Palace Museum, shining a light on the third and final ruler of the High Qing period (1683- 1799), Emperor Qianlong.

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Today, Filipinos make up Macao's largest non-Chinese population. But their influence has been felt here for more than 400 years. From books to bread, we take a look at some of their contributions to the city.

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China and Brazil recently commemorated 50 years of diplomatic relations. President Xi Jinping's state visit to the South American giant in November was about building on those foundations to create an even more prosperous partnership in the future.

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A new Light Rapid Transit line is changing the way Macao people live, work and travel. It's one of many milestones in Macao-mainland integration that's been achieved over the past few years.



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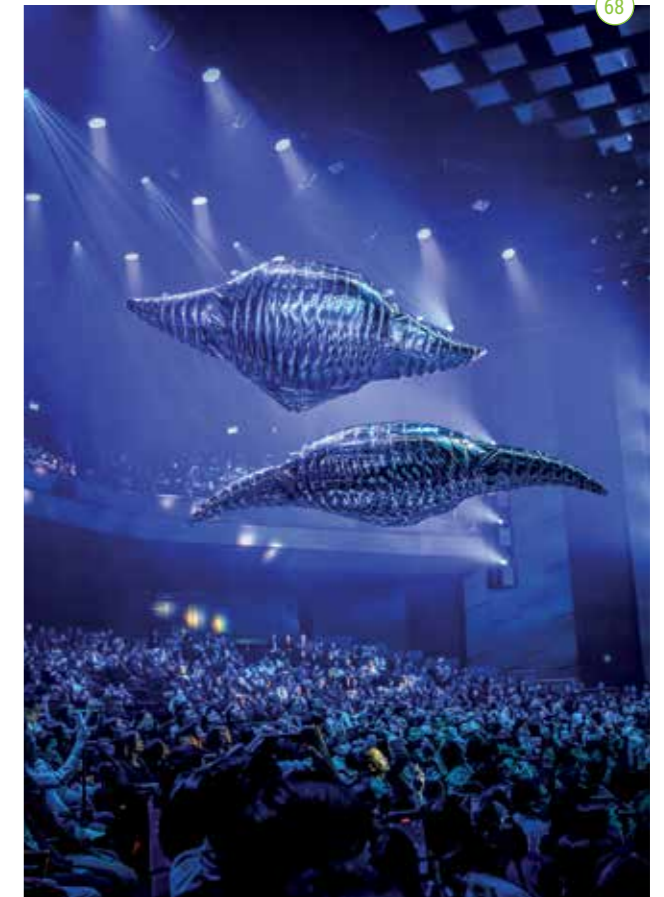
Anny Leong and Law Weng Sam represent Macao in beach volleyball, an emerging sport in the SAR. Here's how the athletes moved from bumping and spiking on indoor courts to the shores of Hac Sa Beach. From there, they're looking to take on the world.

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Local cook Lam Won Lun has taken a dim sum staple and made it his own. Lam's innovative rice rolls recently earned his humble hole-in-the-wall a sought after position on every foodie traveller's itinerary of Macao.

68 Theatre, Tradition and Technology Meet in Macau 2049

A new resident theatre show has opened in the city, courtesy of the great Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou. From its lion dances to holograms, *Macau 2049* presents "China's cultural richness in a way that resonates with new generations".



74 Macao's Pink Dolphins are 'Our Friends and Neighbours'

Two local conservationists, Ken Kwan and Viena Mak, speak with *Macao* magazine about their experiences with these charismatic marine mammals, whose playful antics win over the hearts of all who encounter them.

80 Fancy a trip to Shenzhen?

We take a tour of one of the Greater Bay Area's multifaceted powerhouses, revealing a city where innovation, creativing and the natural environment go hand-in-hand. And it's only one hour from Macao.

86 25 Years of Macao: Flags, Fireworks and Festivity

The Special Administrative Region marked its 25th anniversary on 20 December with a series of joyful celebrations. In this photo essay, we showcase a city decked out in red and green flags, emblematic of the motherland and Macao.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

President Xi Jinping: On Tour in Macao

The country's leader spent three days of December in the Special Administrative Region (SAR), where he shared in the city's celebrations as it marked a quarter century since its return to the motherland. The president used the opportunity to speak with locals from all walks of life. He also inaugurated Macao's sixth-term government.



President Xi Jinping arrived in Macao on 18 December, accompanied by his wife, Peng Liyuan, to participate in the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Special Administrative Region



Text **Harald Bruning** and **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

Upon his arrival, President Xi expressed his happiness to be back in Macao for the first time in five years

Late last year, Macao warmly welcomed President Xi Jinping to mark the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland. The president and his wife, Peng Liyuan, embarked on an action-packed three-day visit to the SAR, arriving on 18 December to participate in a series of celebratory events and engagements – including the swearing in of Macao's sixth-term government.

At the airport, the couple stepped out of their aircraft and onto a red carpet. Then-Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, his soon-to-be successor Sam Hou Fai, their wives, and hundreds of local residents were there to greet the president, who last set foot in the city five years earlier.

In a speech to the people of Macao, Xi described the SAR as “a pearl in the palm of the motherland”. He expressed his happiness to revisit the city and praised its impressive development since the handover. “Over the past 25 years, the practice of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle with Macao characteristics has achieved a world-recognised success, which has demonstrated vitality and a unique appeal,” he noted.

Xi also elaborated on the purpose of his visit, which he said went beyond celebrating the SAR's anniversary “together with the Macao compatriots”. He said he wanted to inspect the city, engage in in-depth exchanges with residents from all walks of life, and discuss plans for Macao's future development.



School children greet Xi with flowers and flags



At a banquet hosted by the Macao government, the president called for a stronger commitment to reform and innovation

REFLECTING ON THE PAST FIVE YEARS

One of several speeches Xi made in Macao highlighted the city's "extraordinary" progress in implementing the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle over the past five years. It did so amidst unprecedented global transformation and a once-in-a-century pandemic, Xi noted. He congratulated Ho's fifth-term government for uniting civil society, driving economic recovery and achieving progress across different sectors during a particularly challenging period in history.

The president pointed to patriotic developments such as Macao's recently amended national security laws and its new school curriculum, which emphasises China's history and constitution. The latter was designed

to foster a stronger sense of national identity among Macao's youth. He also noted that increases in government spending over the past half decade had enhanced the city's housing, healthcare, education and elderly care facilities, thereby improving residents' well-being.

Xi praised Macao's increasingly active role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, particularly with regards to the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, which was enabling the SAR to grow both in size and economically.

Macao's growing influence on the international stage got a special mention, too. This was particularly apparent in the SAR's strengthening ties with Portuguese-speaking countries

through the likes of Forum Macao, a platform dedicated to Sino-Lusophone connections, Xi said. In addition, he highlighted Macao's emerging role as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, and as a base for cultural exchange. The city is a place where Chinese culture is the mainstream and diverse cultures coexist, he emphasised.

XI'S VISION FOR MACAO

In Xi's speech at a welcome banquet held on his first day in Macao, the president laid out three

key expectations he had for the city's development trajectory.

Firstly, he stated the need for Macao to more proactively align itself with national development strategies, such as the Greater Bay Area initiative, and further enhance its role on the international stage.

Secondly, Xi underscored the importance of diversity and inclusiveness. He encouraged Macao to uphold the values of love for the nation and love for Macao while aiming to attract talented individuals to collaboratively build a better future.

Xi met with members of civil society and Macao's new officials of the executive, legislative and judicial organs



Finally, Xi urged Macao's new government to move forward with determination. The president called for a stronger commitment to reform and innovation, leveraging the strengths of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle to explore new avenues for development.

A BUSY SCHEDULE

Xi's time in the city was eventful. There was the 600-guest welcome banquet at the Macao

East Asian Games Dome, hosted by Macao's government, followed by a musical gala marking the region's return to the motherland. The president visited Hengqin, a local university and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) garrison stationed in Taipa, where he acknowledged the vital role these troops play in maintaining Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. On the anniversary of the establishment of the Macao SAR, Xi's final day in the city, he

administered the oath of office to its sixth-term chief executive.

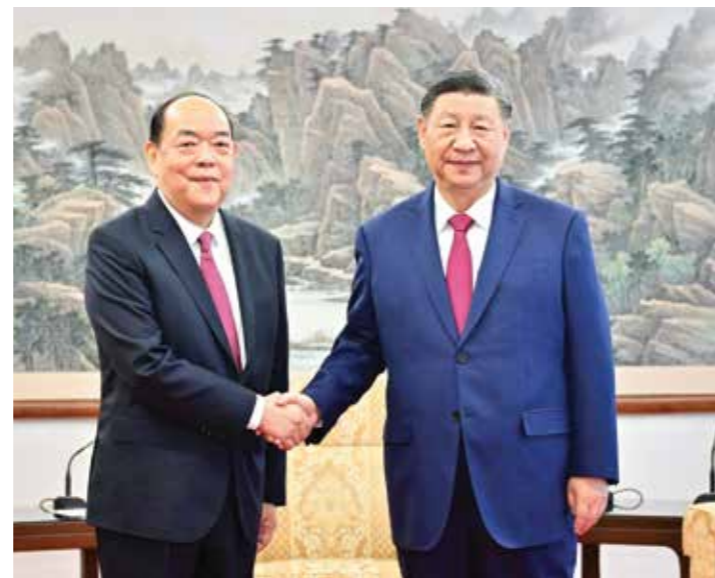
Xi met with many people while in the SAR, from former chief executives and the heads of major mainland-funded companies operating in Macao, to students from the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST).

The president visited MUST on his second day in the city and received in-depth briefings on the university's two state-level key laboratories - one dedicated to developing high-quality traditional Chinese medicines and promoting them to the world, the other to lunar and planetary sciences.

Regarding the latter, Xi praised the *Macao Science 1* space satellite as an example of deepening mainland-Macao cooperation in the high-tech sector. The satellite, jointly developed by scientists from both regions, was successfully launched in 2023.

Xi was able to observe its real-time operations on monitor screens while at MUST.

Later, in the university's library, Xi engaged in conversations with students. "I am very happy to see that Macao's education is thriving and you are full of vitality and confidence," he told them.



During his time in Macao, Xi inspected the PLA forces stationed at Taipa and commended Ho Iat Seng (left) for his leadership over the past five years

During his three-day stay in the city, the president met with students at MUST

(Top) Xi commended two former chief executives, Ho Hau Wah and Chui Sai On, for their service to the SAR

PRESIDENT XI AND THE LILAU WATER



Siwasan Chiewpimolporn

While in Macao, Xi made reference to one of the city's most beloved landmarks: the Lilau fountain. Located in one of Macao's earliest residential areas, Penha, this natural spring has been a source of life-sustaining water for locals across many centuries.

The president recognised the fountain's profound importance to Macao people. "Whoever supports 'One Country, Two Systems' and loves Macao as their home, has 'taken water from the Lilau' and a positive force contributing to Macao's development," he said.

Citing local lore, Xi also noted that anyone who drinks from the Lilau fountain will "sooner or later return to Macao". As legend has it, this special water ensures its drinkers will never forget the city and – should they ever leave – will someday return to live or marry.

Xi's words served as a clarion call for Macao-born professionals living abroad to return and contribute to their city's success.

19 December 2024



A TRIP TO HENGQIN

That same day, he took a trip to the mainland island of Hengqin, where the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone is rapidly taking shape. While there, he hailed the cooperation zone as a boon to Macao's economic diversification.

"Practice has proven that the central authorities' decision to develop Hengqin and establish the cooperation zone is completely correct," Xi said in a speech made that day.

The president met with Macao residents living in Hengqin as well as entrepreneurs from the SAR who had launched businesses there. He

noted that Hengqin provides huge opportunities for Macao's youth to achieve their ambitions, and expressed the hope that more young people from Macao would go on to build remarkable careers there.

Looking ahead, Xi said that improved connectivity between Hengqin and Macao, alongside further alignments in the two regions' regulatory frameworks, would elevate their integration to a higher level. Efforts should focus on enhancing public services and social security systems to foster a high-quality living environment that facilitates living, working and entrepreneurship for Macao residents, he added.

Xi also met with Macao residents living in Hengqin

(Opposite page) The musical gala commemorating Macao's 25th anniversary honoured tradition while also looking to a bright future

SWEARING IN THE SIXTH-TERM GOVERNMENT

On the final day of Xi's visit, the anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, the president administered the oath of office for the SAR's sixth-term chief executive in a televised ceremony. Sam's team of principal officials were inaugurated before Xi at the same event.

The president expressed confidence that Sam would lead

both the SAR's government and its people in comprehensively, accurately and unwaveringly implementing 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, under which Macao is administered by its own people with a high degree of autonomy.

Xi said he believed that Macao would firmly safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests while vigorously promoting appropriate economic

diversification and continuously improving public well-being.

He also voiced his conviction that Macao would leverage its unique position and advantages to better integrate itself into China's national development while deepening its connections with other countries and regions around the world.

"The Central Government will fully support the chief executive and the Macao SAR government in fulfilling their duties," Xi affirmed.



MACAO IS PROOF THAT 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS' WORKS

On the day of the SAR's anniversary, Xi again hailed the success of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. He delved into the concept's history, explaining how it was proposed by late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s as a means of reunifying the country. He also expanded on how the framework has helped promote peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between different social systems in both Macao and Hong Kong.

The values of peace, inclusiveness, openness and sharing that are inherent in the principle resonate with both China and the global community, Xi said.

He described Macao's transformations since its return to the motherland as testament to the institutional strengths and vitality of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, highlighting the impressive economic growth, improvements to residents' well-being and the expansion of external cooperation that Deng's vision had facilitated. Xi noted that Macao residents currently enjoy a wider range of rights and freedoms than at any other time in history.

Regarding Macao's unique characteristics, which are protected under the principle, Xi said that the city was "the only place in the world that has Portuguese and Chinese as its official languages". He urged Macao to continue taking advantage of this special quality through fostering trade and cultural exchanges between China and the world's Portuguese-speaking countries.

Macao has played a very important role throughout China's history as "a window to the outside world ... making the most of its unique advantage of being a mixture of different cultures," said the president.

Xi also used the opportunity to call on Macao's young people to not only embrace the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, but to build on it.



"Macao will surely open up new horizons for development and continue creating new glories, as long as the policy of 'One Country, Two Systems' is comprehensively, accurately and unwaveringly implemented," the president said.

Xi's words on his third and final day in the city echoed those from his first. "The rejuvenation of the nation is unstoppable, and the prospect of Macao's development is promising," he said. "As long as we give full play to the institutional advantages of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, and have the courage to work hard and innovate, Macao will certainly create a better tomorrow." ●

Xi and his wife (centre left) bid farewell after their whirlwind three-day visit to Macao

(Opposite page) President Xi (right) personally administered the oath of office for Sam Hou Fai, Macao's sixth-term chief executive

POLITICS

Sam Hou Fai is Sworn in as Macao's Chief Executive

The city's new leader has pledged to uphold the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, prioritise economic diversification and ensure Macao is making significant contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.



Text **Harald Bruning, Gonçalo César de Sá** and **Xinhua News Agency**
Photos **Government Information Bureau**

On 20 December, President Xi Jinping administered the oath of office to Sam Hou Fai as the sixth-term chief executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR). That same sunny morning, the new government's principal officials, the prosecutor-general and all members of the Executive Council also took their oaths of office in the presence of the country's President.

The ceremony was held at the Macao East Asian Games Dome in Taipa, as part of a series of celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland. Around 1,300 guests were in attendance.

In his address after the oaths, Sam pledged to uphold the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, maintaining the legal order of the SAR as outlined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and Macao's Basic Law. He emphasised the importance of safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests while promoting the principle of 'Macao people administering Macao'.

Sam committed to enhancing patriotic education in Macao and continuously improving the region's legal framework, alongside mechanisms that protect national security. With regards to public administration, the new leader expressed his dedication to a people-centred approach and to improving the



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Macao's newly minted chief executive after swearing Sam Hou Fai into office

(Opposite page) Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai is leading the SAR into its next five years of transformation and progress

ways in which Macao is governed. He noted that his government aims to reform the SAR's public administration and legal systems while strengthening its overall judicial framework.

The new chief executive also vowed to pursue appropriate economic diversification, adhering to the strategic goals of 'One Centre, One Platform, One Base' and the '1+4' economic model. The former refers to Macao's triple status as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform and an exchange and cooperation base with Chinese culture as the mainstream and the coexistence of different cultures. The '1+4' model is Macao's diversification strategy, whereby integrated tourism and leisure remain the backbone of Macao's economy while supporting four emerging industries. Sam said that the 'One Centre, One Platform, One

Base' and the '1+4' models will guide the SAR's development trajectory under his watch.

He also outlined plans to support the transformation of traditional industries and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing opportunities for the public and local businesses.

Sam promised to improve citizens' livelihoods by tackling issues related to social security, healthcare, elder care, childcare, transportation and urban renewal with practical solutions. He stated that Macao would fully leverage its role as a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, actively engage in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and work diligently to advance the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Additionally, Macao would contribute significantly to the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative and

implement policies to cultivate top talent, especially in science and technology, positioning itself as an international hub for skilled professionals.

The chief executive noted that his government would support the growth of patriotic organisations and enhance the management of non-governmental organisations to strengthen Macao's social governance, helping secure long-term stability and prosperity.

Sam expressed his commitment to seeing the city branded as 'law-based Macao', 'vibrant Macao', 'cultural Macao' and 'blissful Macao'.

In closing, he envisioned that the SAR would reach new heights as "the pearl in the palm of the motherland" – as Macao has been described by Xi. Sam added that he was confident the city would make significant contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as it embraced a path to modernisation. ●



The 10 principal officials of Macao's sixth-term government stand on stage at their inauguration ceremony, with Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai at their centre

Xinhua News Agency

POLITICS

Who's Who in Macao's New Government

The Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s sixth-term government was sworn in on 20 December 2024, in a ceremony attended by President Xi Jinping. While many of the faces remain the same as the previous administration, there are a number of newcomers – including Sam Hou Fai, the city's new chief executive.



“

I would lead the sixth-term Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government with the philosophy “Striving Together, Upholding Integrity and Innovating”. This was in order to push forward the work of most concern to the general public, while continuing to advance key initiatives crucial for long-term development.”

– Sam Hou Fai, Macao Chief Executive
1 December 2024

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá** and **Amanda Saxton**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: SAM HOU FAI

Born in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, 1962, Sam Hou Fai earned a bachelor's degree in law from Beijing's Peking University. He also completed advanced studies in Portuguese language, culture and law at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, as well as further legal courses at the University of Macau. Sam participated in Macao's first magistrate training course and further advanced courses at its Legal and Judicial Training Centre.

The chief executive began his career as a practicing lawyer in the mainland. He returned to Macao in 1993, after studying in Portugal, and worked as a judge of the Court of General Jurisdiction. Sam was later elected as a member of the Judiciary Committee of Macao.

From Macao's return to the motherland in 1999 until August 2024, Sam held the position of president of the Court of Final Appeal. During this time, he also served as chairman of the Magistrate Council, a member of the Independent Commission for the Recommendation of Judges, a member of the Regional Legal Assistance and International Mutual Legal Assistance Working Committee and Honorary President of the Association for the Promotion of the Macao Basic Law.

On 13 October 2024, Sam won Macao's Chief Executive Election. The State Council appointed him as the region's sixth-term chief executive on 25 October. He assumed office on 20 December 2024, pledging to fully, faithfully and steadfastly implement the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle while resolutely safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS



**SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION
AND JUSTICE:
ANDRE CHEONG WENG CHON**

Born in Beijing in 1966, Andre Cheong holds a bachelor of arts in Portuguese studies from Beijing Foreign Studies University and a bachelor of law from the University of Macau. Before Macao's 1999 handover, he served as registrar of the Real Estate Registry and director of the Judicial Affairs Bureau. Afterward, he was director of the Legal Affairs Bureau for 14 years, overseeing critical legislative initiatives.

From 2014 to 2019, Cheong led the Commission Against Corruption, enhancing Macao's anti-corruption framework. Since 2019, his roles have included secretary for Administration and Justice, spokesperson for the Executive Council and deputy director of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin's management committee. Cheong also chaired the Gaming Concessions Public Tender Committee in 2022–2023.

After being reappointed as Macao's secretary for Administration and Justice, Cheong noted that Xi's vision for the new government's direction provided a clear picture of what was to come. He also committed to strengthening Macao's legal and administrative systems to support governance and national security objectives.



**SECRETARY FOR ECONOMY AND FINANCE:
TAI KIN IP**

Born in Macao in 1968, Tai Kin Ip has family roots in Jieyang, Guangdong Province. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics from the Catholic University of Portugal and a master's degree in government studies from the University of Saint Joseph, Macao.

Tai joined the Macao Economic Services, now known as the Economic and Technological Development Bureau, in 1995 and rose through the ranks to become its director in 2016 – a position he held until 2024. His tenure included leadership of several advisory and development committees, such as the SME Aid Scheme, Industrial and Commercial Development Fund, and High-Tech Sector Task Force.

He has also participated in several of the World Trade Organization's Trade Policy Reviews of Macao, and has represented the Special Administrative Region at various international economic forums, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

As secretary for Economy and Finance, he said he would prioritise Macao's economic diversification, aligning with national strategies like the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin to ensure sustainable growth and enhanced employment opportunities.



**SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:
WONG SIO CHAK**

Born in Guangdong Province in 1968, Wong Sio Chak holds both a bachelor's degree and doctorate in law from Beijing's Peking University.

Beginning his career as a technician with Macao's Judiciary Police, Wong progressed through several key roles, including acting director of the Judiciary Police, before being appointed assistant prosecutor-general of the Public Prosecutions Office on a permanent basis in March 2000. Later that year, he was appointed as director of the Judiciary Police. Prior to the city's return to the motherland, Wong was instrumental in establishing post-handover security frameworks.

Wong was sworn in as secretary for security of the fourth-term government of Macao in 2014, a role he has now kept through three successive governments. Since then, he has overseen public safety and law enforcement – leading efforts to modernise Macao's national security laws, while emphasising the need for ongoing legislative and operational enhancements.

After his latest reappointment, Wong pledged that he and his colleagues would do their utmost to fulfil their responsibilities in line with Xi's directives. He also described Macao's national security law amendments as "a new starting point, not an endpoint".



**SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS
AND CULTURE:
O LAM**

Born in Guangdong Province in 1974, O Lam holds a bachelor's degree in international economics and finance from Guangzhou's Jinan University and an MBA from the American Graduate School of Business in Switzerland.

Her career includes senior positions in sports development, municipal administration, and government advisory. O played a key role in organising the 2005 East Asian Games and later served as advisor and chief-of-office in the Chief Executive's Office. From 2019 to 2024, she was vice chairperson of the Municipal Affairs Bureau's administration committee and led the Macau Slaughter House Board.

In her new role as secretary for Social Affairs, O promised that her department would work hard to engage with the community, particularly youth groups, to better understand their needs. O vowed to take a more people-centred approach, placing the public's aspirations for a better life "as the starting and ending point of our work."



**SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT
AND PUBLIC WORKS:
RAYMOND TAM VAI MAN**

Born in Macao in 1960, Raymond Tam holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering with a minor in urban planning from Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University, a master's degree in public administration from Guangzhou's Sun Yat-sen University and a master's in environmental and hydraulic engineering from the University of Macau.

Tam's career began in municipal services and he served as acting department head at the Municipal Council of Macao prior to the city's handover. His leadership roles since then have included serving as director of the Environmental Protection Bureau and chair of the Energy Conservation Fund. He also briefly led the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau.

In his new role, Tam said that his department's work would enable the people of Macao to "fly higher, go further, and achieve better development."



**PROSECUTOR-GENERAL OF THE
PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS OFFICE:
CHAN TSZ KING**

Born in Hong Kong in 1970, Chan Tsz King obtained a bachelor's degree in law from the Autonomous University of Lisbon in Portugal. He then went on to complete the first Training Course for Magistrates of Macao Courts and the Public Prosecutions Office in 1997, and the inaugural Advanced Course of the Magistrate Training Centre in 1998.

Chan was appointed as prosecutor of the Public Prosecutions Office in 1997 and promoted to assistant prosecutor-general in 2000. From 2012 to 2019, he was assigned to the Office of the Courts of Final Appeal and Second Instance of Public Prosecutions Office. He served as Macao's commissioner against corruption between 2019 and 2024.

Chan has been active in legal training, having taught at the University of Macau's law faculty between 1998 and 2004. He was a member of the magistrate training course's pedagogical council between 2006 and 2008.

Chan has contributed to various legal committees and councils, including the Prosecutors' Committee, the Law Reform Council and the Asset Freezing Coordination Commission. In his new role, Chan said he and his team would diligently fulfil a holistic approach to national security, uphold the rule of law and unswervingly carry out the constitutional order of the Constitution and the Basic Law of Macao.



**COMMISSIONER AGAINST
CORRUPTION:
AO IEONG SEONG**

Born in Macao in 1984, Ao Ieong Seong earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in law from the University of Macau.

She began her career as an investigator with the Commission Against Corruption and later served as a public prosecutor, specialising in criminal proceedings. She also worked as a senior instructor in her alma mater's law faculty.

From 2019 to 2024, Ao was Macao's deputy commissioner against corruption and director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, where she spearheaded initiatives to strengthen transparency and accountability.

As commissioner, Ao has said she would focus on enhancing anti-corruption measures and fostering a culture of integrity in public administration.



**COMMISSIONER OF AUDIT:
AO IEONG U**

Born in Guangdong Province in 1968, Ao Ieong U holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the South China University of Technology in Guangzhou, a master's degree in software engineering from the University of Macau and a master's degree in comparative jurisprudence from Huaqiao University in Quanzhou.

She began her career in public service as a senior technician with Macao's Judiciary Police in 1994, later advancing to leadership positions in the Identification Services Bureau, including as its director (2014–2019). Ao served as the president of the Pension Fund monitoring committee from 2015 to 2019.

Between 2019 and 2024, she served as secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, overseeing numerous committees related to education, youth and elderly affairs, heritage and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, among others. Ao has also been heavily involved in organising the 15th National Games, which will be co-hosted by Macao in November this year.

In her new role as commissioner of audit, Ao Ieong will dedicate her energy to improving financial oversight and ensuring transparency in the management of public resources.



**COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF THE UNITARY POLICE SERVICE:
LEONG MAN CHEONG**

Born in Macao in 1964, Leong Man Cheong holds a bachelor's degree in police sciences from the Academy of Public Security Forces of Macao and a master's degree in law from the Macau University of Science and Technology.

His extensive career in law enforcement began in 1988, when he joined the Public Security Police Force. While there, he held various leadership positions including at the Special Duties Unit's anti-riot squad and as commander of the Command Department's auxiliary team.

In 2003, Leong was appointed as head of the Intelligence Analysis Centre of the Unitary Police Service's liaison office, before moving on to command the Public Security Police Force's Special Duties Unit in 2005. He assumed the post of head of the Public Security Police Force's operations department in 2013 and became assistant to the Commissioner-General of the Unitary Police Service in 2014.

Leong took up his ongoing role as commissioner-general of the Unitary Police Service in December 2019. In this role, he oversees the coordination of public security strategies and initiatives, ensuring Macao's safety and stability through effective management of police operations.



**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF
MACAO CUSTOMS:
ADRIANO MARQUES HO**

Born in Macao in 1967, Adriano Marques Ho earned a bachelor's degree in law from the Macao University of Science and Technology.

He joined the Judiciary Police in 1988, where he progressed through senior roles, including as the chief coordinator of criminal investigations and as Macao's senior assistant inspector-general – a position he began in 2022. From 2020 to 2024, Ho served as director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau.

Now, as the new director-general of Macao Customs, Ho is tasked with modernising customs operations, enhancing trade facilitation, and strengthening border security to align with Macao's development goals and national security priorities. ●



“The main objectives of the principal officials in my government are to advance the principle of ‘One Country, Two Systems’, enhance the well-being of our citizens, safeguard national security, and lead the local community in collaboratively building a brighter future.

I recognise the high expectations that Macao society has for the new government team, but I am confident in their commitment and unity to fulfill our responsibilities effectively.”

– Sam Hou Fai, Macao Chief Executive
1 December 2024





ARTS & CULTURE

The Emperor Who Shaped an Era

This year's collaborative exhibition between the Macao Museum of Art and the Palace Museum offers a glimpse into the life of Emperor Qianlong, a visionary leader proud to rule over a multi-cultural China during the High Qing period. "Palace of Double Brilliance" contains more than a hundred artifacts from Qianlong's beloved home in the Forbidden City.

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

The exhibition features several portraits of Emperor Qianlong, including this intricately detailed depiction of him in an embroidered robe

Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799) wore many hats. He was a ruler who presided over one of imperial China's most prosperous eras. A devoted son deeply influenced by his family. And a husband whose poetry immortalised a beloved wife. His life was a blend of power and artistry, discipline and passion, military ambition and cultural refinement. From his formative years in the royal court's residence for princes – which later became the Palace of Double Brilliance (*Chonghua Gong* in Chinese) – to his six-decade reign over a vast empire, Qianlong's story continues to fascinate history buffs today. The Macao Museum of Art (MAM)'s current exhibition offers insights into the man behind the legend.

Titled "Palace of Double Brilliance", this exhibition is the fruit of MAM's annual collaboration with Beijing's Palace Museum. It features more than 130 precious relics, each having touched the emperor's life in some way. Qianlong followed in the footsteps of his father, Yongzheng (1678–1735), and grandfather, Kangxi (1654–1722), to rule China. His was

the third in a series of prosperous reigns now hailed as the High Qing Era (1683–1799) of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).

The Palace of Double Brilliance, a royal residence within the Forbidden City, was the setting of many notable chapters throughout Qianlong's life. At its namesake exhibition's opening ceremony in late November, director of the Palace Museum Wang Xudong tells *Macao* magazine that the complex "contained many memories for the emperor", particularly from his years of study as a young prince. "When you step into the palace today, you must consider how a prince became an emperor who ruled the country with so many ethnic groups in unity," he says.

The residence was given the name 'Double Brilliance' by Qianlong's loyal officials, in honour of a legendary leader of ancient China: Emperor Shun (c. 23rd century BCE), who succeeded Emperor Yao (c. 24th century BCE). The name reflects the continuation of wise and just leadership across generations. An apt moniker, given Qianlong's own family's achievements.



(Opposite page) "The Palace of Double Brilliance" reveals how an imperial residence during the High Qing Era was furnished

(Centre) A silk robe, worn by Emperor Qianlong himself, embellished with fine needlework depicting auspicious motifs

This ink painting has Qianlong dressed in ethnic Han clothing, reflective of his keen interest in China's cultural diversity

After ascending to the throne in 1735, Qianlong embarked on extensive renovations of the palace. He transformed it into a multifunctional complex boasting a gallery of treasures he'd received from his father as a prince; a theatre staging the opera shows he enjoyed with his mother; and a salubrious reception area where he entertained foreign envoys and hosted tea ceremonies.

In Qianlong's later years, he wrote about the palace's influence on his reign. "The governance of more than 40 years all came from this place," he noted in his work titled, *An Imperial Record of the Palace of Double Brilliance*.

ROYAL ATTIRE

MAM's exhibition is divided into four thematic sections. The first, Born to Be

an Emperor, welcomes visitors with an installation recreating the Palace of Double Brilliance's front chamber – complete with a plaque inscribed with Qianlong's own calligraphy. The space is richly adorned with court furnishings, including incense burners, footrests and fans that offer a glimpse into the sumptuous tastes of the Qing court.

There's also a striking copy of a portrait depicting young Qianlong in a yellow robe, painted by an anonymous Qing painter. Alongside the portrait, a similar robe is displayed in the flesh (or silk, as is the case here). The remarkably well-preserved garment has been embroidered with golden dragons, polychrome clouds and other imperial symbols. The physical presence of Qianlong's regal costume, juxtaposed with the painting of the man himself, invites viewers

to envision the emperor's height and build, helping bridge the gap between historical imagery and lived reality. This kind of intimacy characterises the exhibition.

Another painting shows Qianlong in Han attire, stroking a sika deer with a child attendant standing by. Here, he resembles an immortal – a mythical being within Chinese folklore. Both the child and the deer were painted gazing up at the elegant prince, who had yet to ascend the throne. The inclusion of Han clothing, when Qianlong himself was Manchu, is considered emblematic of the leader's future efforts to promote cultural harmony in his multi-ethnic empire. Portraying young Qianlong in this way foretold his reputation as a sovereign who valued and embraced the differing cultural customs existing in his country.



TWO BELOVED EMPRESSES

The exhibition's second section, Marriage and Family, delves deeper into the emperor's connections with his first wife as well as his mother. In 1727, at the tender age of 15, Qianlong married a woman from the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner Fuca clan, who became known as Empress Xiaoxianchun (1712–1748). Renowned for her prudence and sensibility, the empress was selected by Qianlong's father, Emperor

Yongzheng, to be the primary escort for his son.

One of MAM's exhibits is a plaque inscribed with the words 'Zhilan Shi,' or 'Orchid Chamber' – the name of Xiaoxianchun's personal residence within the palace. Qianlong chose the moniker as a mark of deep affection for his wife, drawing from an old Chinese saying: "When one lives with virtuous people, it is as if one has entered a room filled with the fragrance of orchids."

The couple's devotion to one another has been widely documented by Qianlong himself; a substantial number of the more than 40,000 poems he wrote throughout his lifetime were dedicated to his first wife. In 1748, during an imperial tour of the country's east, the empress fell ill and died. To mourn her tragic passing, Qianlong wrote a moving eulogy comprising four poems. These are displayed on their original scroll in the "Palace of Double Brilliance" exhibition.

Followers of Chinese costume dramas will have heard of the emperor's mother, Empress Dowager Chongqing (1692–1777), also known as Empress Xiaoshengxian. The 2011 TV series, *Empresses in the Palace*, offers a heavily fictionalised account of her life. Quite different interpretations of Xiaoshengxian's character were portrayed in its 2018 sequel, *Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace*, and in another drama series from that same year, *Story of Yanxi Palace*.

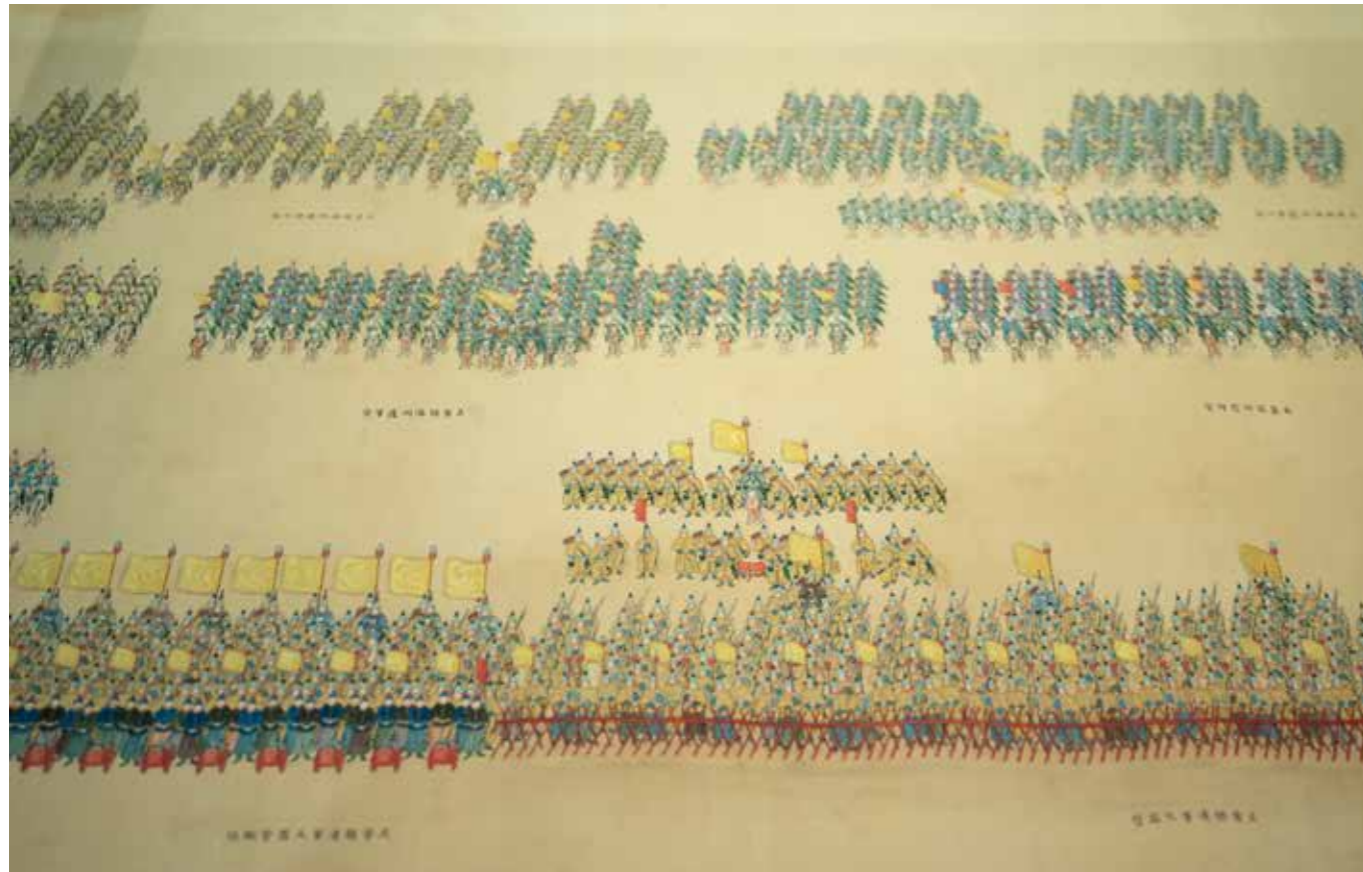
MAM's exhibition pays tribute to the empress' enthusiasm for Chinese opera through displays of costumes worn by court performers. There's also a selection of bound scripts outlining performance synopses from special events staged during the likes of Lunar New Year and the Double Ninth Festival. Their stories tend to be fables full of auspicious meanings.

The two empresses' lives are further illustrated through personal artifacts, including kingfisher feather hair pins shaped like chrysanthemums and butterflies; delicate symbols of the women's grace and elegance.

(Opposite page) A portrait of the young Empress Xiaoshengxian in a court robe

Visitors admire a selection of opera costumes on display in the exhibition, testament to Emperor Qianlong's appreciation of the art form – a passion he shared with his mother





This 2 metre-long illustration depicts one of the Eight Banner Forces' elaborate military parades

(Opposite page) A *bianhu* (moon flask) delicately painted with a dragon amidst clouds, made during Emperor Qianlong's reign

LITERARY AND MILITARY PROWESS

Qianlong, who received Manchu and Confucian education from childhood, dedicated his reign to promoting cultural integration. This is documented in the third section of the exhibition, the Flourishing Era of Civilian Rule. Here, visitors can peruse a selection of his written compilations, including *Siku Quanshu* (*Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature*), *Lulu Zhengyi Houbian* (*The Continued Revision of the Imperial Music*

Treatise) and *Yuelu Quanshu* (*Collection of Texts on Music*). Each book demonstrates the emperor's commitment to preserving and synthesising diverse cultural and intellectual traditions, showcasing his ambition to position himself as a learned and enlightened ruler.

Emperor Qianlong was a cultured man, but also a formidable military leader. He proudly referred to himself as the 'Old Man of Ten Great Campaigns', a title reflecting the significant military expeditions he led between 1747 and 1792.

His martial legacy is highlighted in the exhibition's final section, Efficient Governance and Harmonious Nation. Featured here are artworks that vividly portray his victories, such as the Yili Region campaign and the pacification of the Dzungars. A scroll stretching almost 2 metres in length, depicting Eight Banners forces on parade, is one highlight here. Titled *Emperor Qianlong's Review of the Grand Parade of Troops*, the scroll is considered a valuable historical document that sheds light on costumes and ceremonial practices of the era. The Eight Banners were a multi-ethnic military organisation incorporating Manchu, Han and Mongol forces during the Qing dynasty.

A QUARTER CENTURY OF COLLABORATION

MAM and the Palace Museum curated the "Palace of Double Brilliance" exhibition to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to China, which took place in December. The exhibition also marked a quarter century of collaboration between the two great institutions.

Staging an ambitious show like this here, in Macao, holds special significance, according to the Palace Museum's director. Wang believes that the Special Administrative Region's reputation as a hub for cultural exchange will enable Emperor Qianlong's story

– and through it, China's history – to reach a broader audience, he shares with *Macao* magazine.

"The openness and inclusiveness of Chinese culture further allows for cultural exchange through a place like Macao, where it can absorb some of the outstanding achievements of other civilisations," he says. "At the same time, it enables other cultures worldwide to understand Chinese culture through this unique location." ●



▶ SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

The exhibition is on at MAM until 2 March.





SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Contributions Through the Ages: Macao's Filipino Community

The queen of the Orient Premier Tribe dance troupe beams as her group finishes its performance at Sinulog 2024

Walking through the bustling streets of Macao, there's plenty to remind one of the close connections currently shared between the Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Philippines. From comforting aromas that waft from Filipino bakeries, to the sound of the Southeast Asian country's musicians enlivening this city's watering holes. There's also the hard working Filipina domestic workers, whose presence enhances many a Macao home.

In fact, Filipinos make up Macao's biggest non-Chinese ethnicity by a long shot. According to official figures, there were about

31,000 Philippine nationals living and working in the city at the end of last year, or 4.5 percent of its total population.

In the wake of the Sinulog Festival, a vibrant celebration for the Filipino diaspora that's held in Macao annually, we pay tribute to the ties binding the two regions: those that are visible now, and those at risk of being forgotten. For beyond their modern-day contributions, Filipinos have helped shape Macao's social, economic and religious history. Their stories deserve to be told as part of the SAR's multicultural narrative.

THE FILIPINO LEGACY: A HISTORY OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

From Catholicism to commerce, Macao and the Philippines are deeply intertwined. Ivo Carneiro de Sousa delves into the annals of history to uncover the stories of four remarkable Filipinos who shaped Macao's legacy – and were, in turn, shaped by it. Carneiro de Sousa serves as a history professor at Macao's East-West Institute for Advanced Studies.

RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY FOUNDATIONS

One of Macao's most charming churches, the Guia Chapel, sits atop the city's highest peak, nestled within a 17th-century fortress. Built more than 400 years ago by nuns from the Order of Saint Clare, the chapel served as an early connector between Macao and Manila, the Philippines' capital.

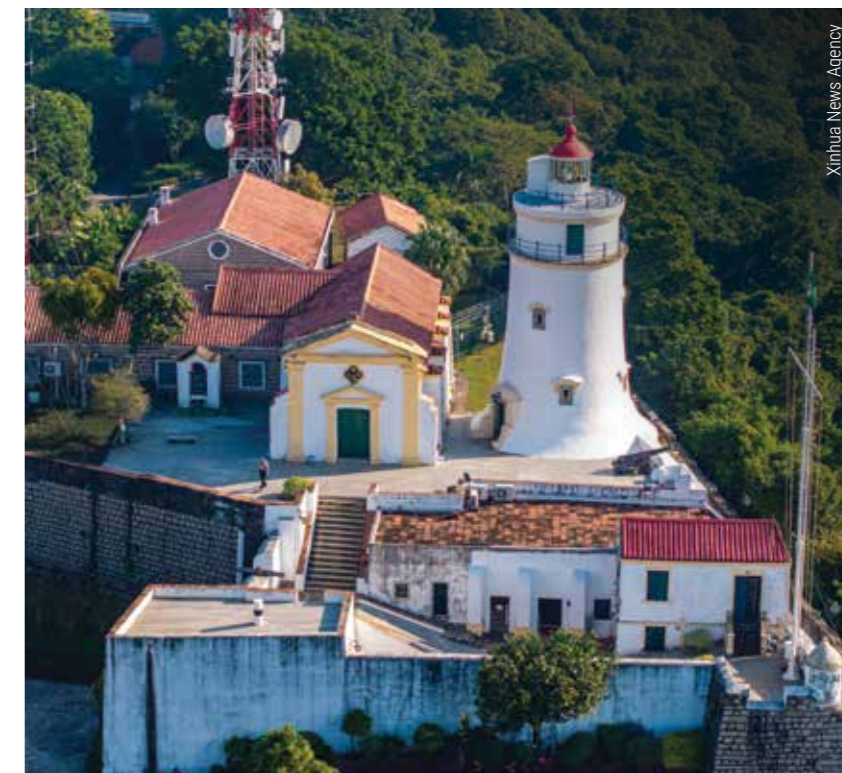
Those Clarist nuns reached Macao via the Philippines. While most were of Spanish origin, one noteworthy novice was a Philippine native. Her name was Marta de San Bernardo, and her ethnicity barred her from becoming a fully-fledged nun in her homeland due to strict rules imposed by the Spanish Empire, which administered the region at the time.

Fortunately, Bernardo was able to bypass these barriers by travelling to Macao, where she became the first Filipino nun in the Order of Saint Clare.

After arriving in the city in 1633, Bernardo went on to play a pivotal role in the Clarist monastery as a guardian and teacher. Her contributions extended to literature; she left behind a lengthy

Portuguese-language manuscript centred around the final stages of Jesus' life. This work is another reason Bernardo's name is worth marking down in the history books: she was one of Macao's earliest female writers.

Built in the early 1600s, the Guia Chapel was an early place of worship for Clarist nuns – who arrived in Macao from the Philippines



Xinhua News Agency

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The 18th century saw Filipinos actively engaging in Macao's thriving trade networks. Interestingly, the first female registered as owning a ship in the city was a Filipina from Batangas Province named Maria de Abreu. Abreu had married the wealthy Macanese merchant Luís de Abreu in 1708. Noted for his success in trading goods like Chinese silk and South American silver, Luís taught his young wife all he knew. This came in handy after his death, when she not only managed but expanded the family business.

Abreu became a successful trader in her own right, her ship laden with betel nuts, rice, altar wine and religious artifacts – including images of the Virgin Mary

and Catholic saints that still adorn Macao's churches today. She died in 1721, leaving behind a large family of seven daughters and three sons.

Another Filipina, named Regina Verrosa, became a prominent businesswoman in Macao in the early 19th century, following the death of her French husband, the naval officer G n reux-Jean-Felix Dayot. Verrosa leveraged her family connections in Manila to establish profitable trade routes that included her native Philippines, but also Cochinchina (also called Nam Ky, today's southern Vietnam), Mauritius, the Caribbean and France. She gained a reputation for bringing Bordeaux wines to Macao and other cities across southern China.



Jos  Rizal (left) and Louren  Marques Pereira



(Below) A 19th-century export painting of Praia Grande capture the heart of Macao's thriving maritime trade industry

RECOGNISING A SHARED HERITAGE

The stories of Marta de San Bernardo, Maria de Abreu, Regina Verrosa and Jos  Rizal illustrate the deep and enduring connections between Macao and the Philippines. Indeed, Filipinos have enriched Macao's cultural and economic fabric through their work, commerce and spiritual practices for centuries. Their legacy is a testament to Macao's cosmopolitan identity, shaped by diverse influences from across Asia and beyond.

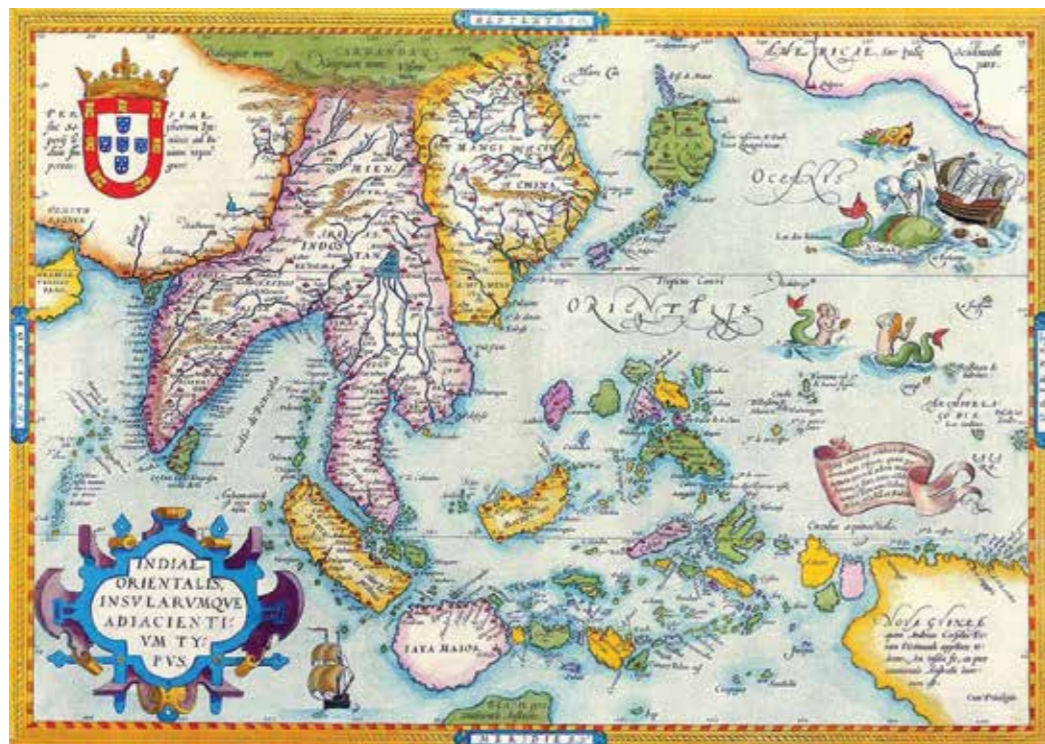
JOS  RIZAL'S VISIT TO MACAO

A notable chapter in Filipino-Macao relations is the visit of Philippine national hero Jos  Rizal in 1888. Rizal, a polymath and prolific writer, described the city with sensitivity and fondness in his letters and diaries. These included notes on Macao's architecture and the coexistence of different cultures.

During his stay, Rizal lodged with Juan Francisco Lecar s, a wealthy Filipino *mestizo* whose family had deep ties to Macao, and his Macanese wife. Lecar s' trade connections spanned Manila, Macao and Canton, while his home overlooking Praia Grande became a hub for intellectual and cultural exchange.

Rizal recalled the Lecar s' home in his writing, describing the exotic plants imported from the Philippines

and many illustrious friends, including the surgeon Louren  Marques Pereira – whose namesake road runs along the Macao Peninsula's western flank.



German cartographer Abraham Ortelius, maker of the first atlas, drew on Portuguese maps to create this 1570 map of Southeast Asia

Courtesy of Islands of Gold. Antique maps of Japan

EDNA MAY LAZARO: CONSUL GENERAL

Interview by **Amanda Saxton**

Edna May Lazaro took on the role of Philippine consul general in Macao late last year, stepping into her new city with open eyes and high hopes. The experienced diplomat shares insights into a vibrant Filipino community that's defined by the *Bayanihan* spirit, and reflects on what makes Macao such a favoured destination for her compatriots.

This interview has been edited for length and brevity.

What has Filipino migration to Macao looked like in the modern era?

The first wave of Filipino migrants to Macao started in the late 1970s. Most were white collar professionals and nurses. Over the next few decades, engineers and skilled workers in the construction industry helped build Macao, before a major wave of our people arrived in the 2000s as the hospitality industry started growing very rapidly.

Filipina domestic helpers, of course, have been arriving throughout. These diligent workers play indispensable and meaningful roles in household life in Macao.

Tell us about Macao's Filipino community today.

There are more than 30,800 Filipino nationals in Macao, mostly temporary workers but also permanent residents. Aside from domestic helpers, who make up about half of this population, we have Filipino healthcare workers who worked tirelessly during the pandemic – something I believe the Macao government was very thankful for. We have several professors working for major universities in Macao, as well as teachers in some international schools. Filipinos involved in education are very important because they help mould the minds of the youth in Macao.

There are business owners, too. Macao has its own 'Pinoy Street' [Rua da Alfândega, forming the unofficial centre for the city's Filipino community]. These businesses persevered through the pandemic and continued to employ Filipino workers, in many cases enabling them to stay in Macao. They helped keep the economy going. Filipinos are also famously musical. Many of the singers and entertainers working in Macao's hotels are talents from the Philippines.



Edna May Lazaro, consul general to the Philippines

António Sanmarful

Macao's tourism and hospitality sectors employ many Filipinos, too. We really are at the heart of the economy here. Then there are the priests and other religious leaders who carry out charity work and provide spiritual guidance. That's mainly in the Catholic community, but also goes beyond.

There are many different Filipino groups active here, united by an umbrella organisation called the Filipino Community Alliance in Macau. Its mission is to strengthen unity and camaraderie amongst Philippine nationals in the city. Filipinos tend to have the spirit of volunteerism; everyone pulls together to organise festivities and events. That's what I like so much about our community in Macao, the *Bayanihan* spirit is alive and well.

The Bayanihan spirit? Say more.

We have this concept in the Philippines called the *Bayanihan* spirit. It's part of our DNA and means working towards the common good of the community. All over the world, Filipinos are recognised as being warm, being welcoming, and being very dedicated to our work. We go over and beyond what is expected of us.

I think wherever Filipinos go, they are always distinguished by their work ethic and caring natures. We are valued all over the world for these reasons, including here in Macao. We are proud of that. Proud of our reputation, which has a lot to do with the *Bayanihan* spirit.



Members of Macao's Filipino community on parade during a religious festival in the city

Aside from job opportunities, what attracts Filipinos to Macao?

One thing is proximity. It's just a two-and-a-half hour flight from Macao to Manila. That's very important for our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), the ability to stay connected to family. It was made even easier by favourable visa policies between the two regions.

Another big advantage is that Macao people are very open and accommodating to foreigners. This is something I heard about before coming to Macao, but I am also

starting to experience myself. Macao is also quite laid back compared to cities like Hong Kong and Tokyo. People aren't too rushed, they take a stroll and can enjoy the view. I like this vibe. I think most Filipinos appreciate that Macao is a very walkable city.

Being able to practice your religion is also important, right?

Indeed, that point is very important to those of us living here: freedom of religion is respected in Macao. Filipinos thrive in an environment

where they can practice their Christian faith. We are known for transporting our faith wherever we go: it's central to Filipino culture and keeps us united as a people.

So, it's very special for us to be able to have mass in the beautiful St. Augustine's Church, in our own Tagalog language. I think the mere fact that Macao allows a Filipino mass to be heard in its very centre, inside a UNESCO heritage site, speaks volumes of the respect the city accords to foreigners.

How are you finding your new role? What exactly does a consul general do?

It felt like a very auspicious time for me to be assigned in Macao, since so many milestones are being celebrated. We had the 25th anniversary of the Special Administrative Region back in December, for example. And 2025 is a very important year for the Philippines and China's bilateral relations because we will be celebrating our golden anniversary.

As for the job, we have three pillars in the Philippine foreign service: political diplomacy, economic diplomacy and our assistance to nationals. Our Macao consulate is mainly dedicated to that third pillar, due to the large number of Philippine nationals here.

So, I think I have a very important task to do: to ensure the wellbeing and also the protection of our OFWs, and to make sure that our people-to-people exchanges with

Macao are further strengthened. I'm here to build more bridges between our two peoples.

What are some of the 'bridges' you plan to build this year?

There are plans to bring Filipino artists here as part of the celebrations for the golden anniversary, along with sports teams – you know, Filipinos are very fond of football and basketball. We also want to facilitate more academic exchanges between the universities of Macao and the Philippines, which will enable us to learn from each other.

Can you speak to the existing ties between the two regions?

While our formalised bilateral relations with China go back 50 years, our people-to-people exchanges with that country and, more specifically, Macao stretch back far further. When the Philippines was under Spanish rule (1565–1898), Macanese traders were already establishing businesses in Manila's Chinatown, Binondo. Binondo is considered to be the oldest overseas Chinese community in the world.

A major common thread is our shared Iberian heritage, brought to us by the Spanish and Macao by the Portuguese. You can see that in our European-style vernacular architecture and taste it in our food – much like in Macao.

FRANCISCO JOSÉ PENALBA FAJARDO: PASTRY CHEF AT ANAK PHILIPPINE BREAD

Interview by Amanda Saxton | Photos António Sanmarful

Francisco José Penalba Fajardo's parents, Lucille Penalba Fajardo and Crisostomo Cruz Fajardo, were part of an early wave of Filipino migrants to Macao in the 1980s. The city is where they fell in love, raised their family and founded a highly successful culinary business. Their original bakery, located on the famed 'Pinoy Street' – aka Rua da Alfândega – has morphed into three separate eateries, one of which is manned by Fajardo and his wife. Here, the pastry chef reflects on the mark his family has made in Macao, and on his identity as a proudly Macao-born Filipino.

This interview has been edited for length and brevity.

First up, tell us how your family came to be in Macao

My parents moved here in the mid-1980s, individually. My mum tells me there were a handful of about 20 Filipinos in the city at that time, and they would see each other in church every Sunday. Seeing the congregation get bigger each week was how she knew the Filipino community was growing. Things were very different for the community back then. Mum says it was very quiet, and Filipinos

felt like aliens landing on a new planet when they arrived in Macao.

Mum and dad met in church. She was working as a domestic helper for a Portuguese family, he was a lifeguard at Hac Sa Beach though later worked in hotels. They ended up getting married, having three kids (I was born in 1990), and the rest is history.

How did Anak Philippine Bread get started?

My mum and her brother kicked off the business. They started out experimenting in our home's oven, testing out recipes back in the early 2000s. After settling on a basic *pan* recipe, they started selling bread to friends and family. Soon there were random people coming over to our house to buy bread and stuff all the time, because I think we were the only place in Macao where you could buy Philippine pan. I'd come home from school, be doing my homework, and the doorbell was always ringing with customers. After a month or so of that, mum and dad started talking about renting a place for a proper bakery. The time felt right.

That bakery officially opened in 2003. In the beginning, we



Francisco José Penalba Fajardo's family opened a Filipino bakery in Macao back in 2003, initially to cater to their community – though Anak Philippine Bread has since become very popular with locals and tourists, too

served mainly Filipinos. The community was growing very fast at that time, as the integrated resorts were being established and hiring more and more Filipinos. Then we started getting tourists from the mainland, other parts of Asia and the rest of the world.

What was the bread that started it all?

That would be the *pandesal*. The classic bread roll of the Philippines: sweet, soft and airy. And it's still our best-seller today.

Anak's very much a family operation, right?

Totally. My parents run the business in a really old-school manner; no outside parties involved. And I think that's one of the reasons we have done so well, especially during the pandemic. It's been a bonding experience for our family. The word *anak* actually means 'children' in Tagalog.

We now have the original bakery, a dessert shop – that's where my wife, who is also a pastry chef, and I work – and a canteen. But my mum's opening a fourth place this year, which is going to be a restaurant. I'm not sure if it will be her final project or not!

Have you always been involved in the business?

No, I studied at the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies [now the Macau University of Tourism] and was actually working at a hotel when my mum proposed that she and I open up a dessert shop. She asked if I would consider letting her teach me everything she knew, how to bake cakes and all sorts of other desserts, in order to eventually run this new place – which would mean giving up my hotel career.

So, that's how I got involved in the business [in 2016 or 2017]. At the start, my mum and I fully concentrated on the dessert shop while her brother looked after the bakery. Now, my wife and I are in charge.

It's been an amazing experience, to be honest. I love seeing how everything my mum taught me is now being translated into supporting my family [Fajardo

has a young son, and another child on the way]. That's what I love doing the most.

What do you think's behind Anak's popularity?

When Filipinos come over to Macao, they are looking for better jobs and opportunities. But at the same time, they miss their hometowns. So, you've got this big and growing population of Filipinos who are dreaming of home, but can't go back because they're trying to earn a good living. They can come to our shop, take a bite out of a pandesal, and... it's just a good feeling for them. A nostalgic taste of home.

How would you describe Macao's Filipino community?

Filipinos tend to be very traditional and they brought their traditions over here to Macao. We have festivals like Sinulog [honouring the Child Jesus] and Pahiyas [a harvest festival



Anak Philippine Bread is a family affair: Francisco Jose Penalba Fajardo (right) and his dad, Crisostomo Cruz Fajardo (left), stand behind the counter of one of their three eateries on Macao's 'Pinoy Street'

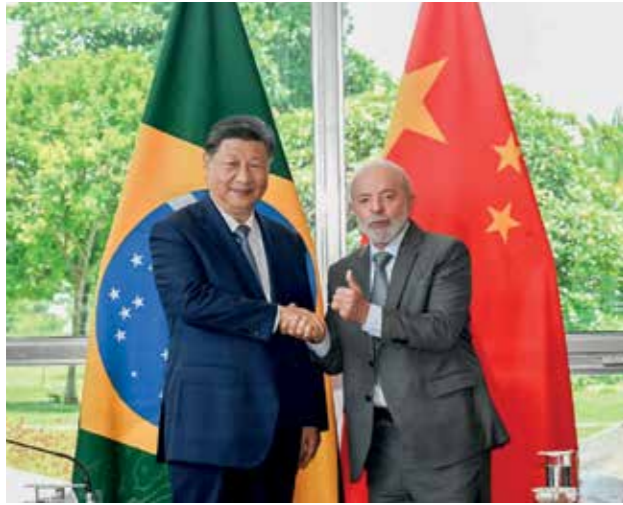
honouring the patron saint of farmers] that we celebrate over here, and of course all Filipinos love Christmas so much. In Macao, pretty much everything gets celebrated – so that's great.

We tend to be very comfortable in Macao because its cultural diversity, which has been around forever. Culture-wise, religion-wise, there just aren't many barriers here.

Where's 'home' for you, as a Macao-born Filipino?

To be honest, I got homesick when I spent six months in the Philippines as a child. Homesick for Macao. My parents

had wanted me to get in touch with my roots, study the language, learn more about my culture, you know. When my mum would call, I'd be asking after all my friends in Macao and must have sounded a bit sad. She asked me, "So, do you miss Macao?" And I told her I missed Chinese food, my friends and just everything! Macao has always been my home and it will be my home for the rest of my life. My wife is a Macao-born Chinese. We were both raised here, we are raising our son here. I'm very proud to say that Macao is my home, and I am proud of what my family is contributing here. ●



PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

A Milestone in China-Brazil Relations

Half a century into their diplomatic relationship, the two countries have agreed to step up their collaboration in trade, technology and leadership of the Global South. President Xi Jinping's state visit to Brazil in November not only resulted in more than three dozen cooperation agreements being signed, but signalled a shift in the balance of power within emerging economies – solidifying a shared vision for greater influence on the world stage.

Text **Fei Pou Lou**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

(Opposite page, top to bottom)
President Xi Jinping and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva after a meeting between their respective delegations

Delegations from China and Brazil meet in Brasília for talks

Crowds gather on the roadside, waving both Chinese and Brazilian flags, to welcome President Xi Jinping

China and Brazil marked a significant joint milestone in 2024: 50 years of diplomatic relations. President Xi Jinping's state visit to the Portuguese-speaking country's capital last November celebrated this half-century of cooperation while setting the stage for future collaboration.

Following the G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Xi and top Brazilian officials – including President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – signed 37 cooperation agreements spanning 16 different sectors, from agriculture to technological innovation, energy and infrastructure. These agreements signalled the strength of commitment from both sides to continue deepening their partnership.

“The China-Brazil relationship is at its best in history, which has not only improved the well-being of the people of the two countries, but also defended the common interests of developing countries, enhanced the strength and voice of the Global South, and made outstanding contributions to world

peace and stability,” Xi told media after a meeting held with his Brazilian counterpart, at the Alvorada Palace.

A STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

João Simões, assistant professor at the City University of Macau's Institute for Research on Portuguese-Speaking Countries, described Xi's visit as “symbolically significant” given political shifts and global tensions currently playing out around the world. During Xi's time in Brazil, he and Lula announced they were elevating their respective countries' ties to a new echelon: the pair now officially form what the Central Government calls a “community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet”. Simões, an expert on Sino-Lusophone relations, tells *Macao* magazine that China reserves this designation for “partners of strategic importance”.



President Lula da Silva held a grand welcome ceremony for President Xi Jinping to Brazil

(Opposite page) Presidents Xi and Lula with the protocols signed by their governments that reinforce bilateral cooperation and increase trade between the two countries

Brazil is seeking to “diversify exports, attract more investment and increase bilateral cooperation with China,” says Simões. More generally, the country hopes to “reposition itself as a relevant player in a polarised world” through diversifying its commercial and political partnerships.

Indeed, Xi’s visit led to a cooperation plan aimed at aligning China’s Belt and Road Initiative with national projects already underway in Brazil. The Brazilian projects include New Industry Brazil, which aims to revitalise the country’s industrial sector; the Growth Acceleration Program, with a focus on infrastructure; and the Ecological Transformation Plan, a comprehensive scheme that involves developing sustainable finance practices and a circular economy.

Simões views the two countries’ synergies under this new cooperation plan as “fundamental” to their partnership’s health.

FROM INTERNATIONALISING THE YUAN TO IMPROVING RURAL INTERNET

One groundbreaking development resulting from Xi’s time in Brazil involved

the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES)’s first foreign currency commercial loan. In a move reflecting the nations’ shared goal of reducing reliance on the US dollar, China Development Bank signed a three-year loan deal with the Brazilian bank worth 5 billion yuan (US\$690 million).

Lula, in particular, has been a strong proponent of creating alternatives to the dollar for transactions between BRICS members (BRICS being the intergovernmental organisation founded by Brazil, Russia, India and China with an emphasis on non-interference and mutual benefit).

Another key part of Xi’s visit focused on Brazil’s initiative to better connect the countries of its continent through infrastructure. Xi attended the Chinese-funded Chancay megaport’s inauguration ceremony while in Peru for the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), which took place just prior to the G20 Summit in Brazil.

In the technological realm, new agreements signed between China and Brazil span collaborations in the photovoltaic industry, developing

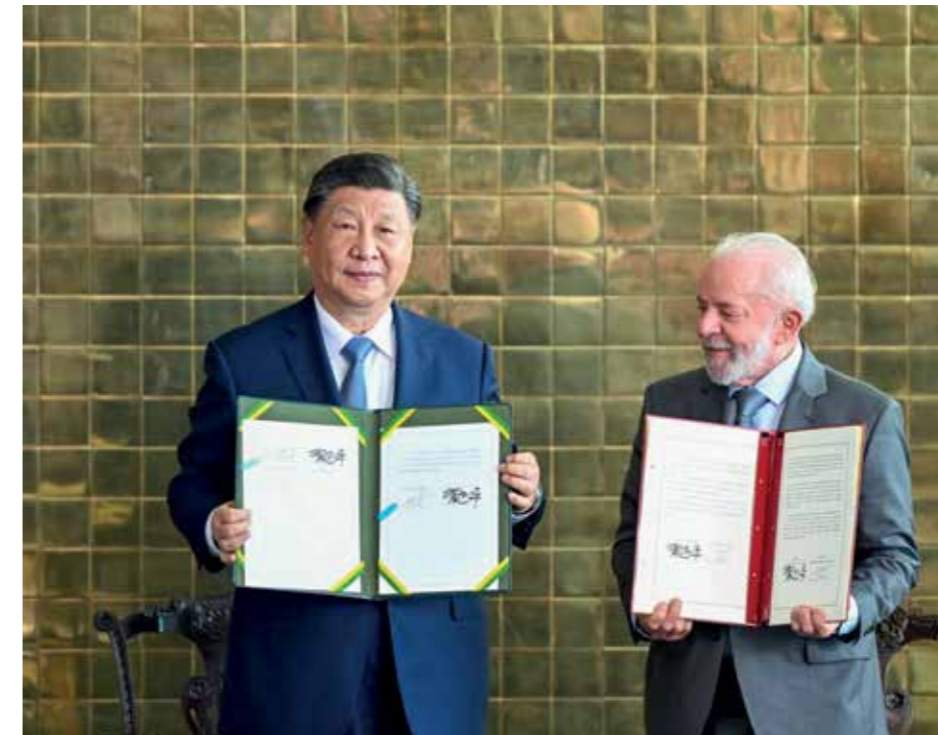
nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, artificial intelligence and digital economy initiatives. One notable partnership involves SpaceSail, the Chinese alternative to Elon Musk’s Starlink, which is set to provide internet access to remote areas in Brazil. Several of these initiatives will be geared towards modernising Brazil’s agricultural sector, an area critical to bilateral trade.

During Xi’s visit, Lula stated that the next phase of the countries’ partnership would focus on sustainable transitions and technological development. “We are determined to build on our cooperation for the next 50 years in areas such as sustainable infrastructure, energy transition,

artificial intelligence, digital economy, health and aerospace,” he said.

HALF A CENTURY OF SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS

China and Brazil first established full diplomatic relations in August 1974. The nations’ relationship deepened in the 20th century, following China’s economic reforms. These spurred rapid industrialisation within the country, along with a focus on global trade and integration. In November 1993, Brazil became China’s first official strategic partner – a major milestone in China’s international relations.



“
We are determined to build on our cooperation for the next 50 years.

– President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

President Xi is welcomed by President Lula da Silva before the start of the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro

(Opposite page) President Xi and Lula jointly meet the press after their talks in Brasilia



Trade between the two nations has since expanded exponentially. In 2003, bilateral trade stood at less than US\$7 billion; by 2023, it had reached US\$157.5 billion; and the first 10 months of 2024 saw trade increase by nearly 10 percent year-on-year. China became Brazil's largest trading partner in 2009 – the same year BRICS was founded. It's maintained that position ever since. Brazil, meanwhile, is China's ninth-biggest trade partner.

Agricultural products have been a cornerstone of the countries' relationship, and Brazil is China's only trade partner with two dedicated agricultural diplomats

in Beijing. Soybeans, corn, sugar, beef, poultry and pork dominate Brazilian exports to China; the South American giant has been China's biggest food supplier since 2017, according to a speech made by Lula while Xi was in his country. Four new protocols were signed between Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and China's General Administration of Customs during the visit, paving the way for even more Brazilian food products to enter the Chinese market – including fresh grapes and sesame seeds.

According to Simões, Brazil aims to increase the amount



of value-added food products it exports to China, in addition to boosting the outflow of traditional agricultural products.

In the opposite direction, Brazil appears to be counting on China to help jump-start its high-tech industry. The country imported US\$4.77 billion worth of semiconductor devices in 2022, with China supplying the vast majority worth of them. In 2023, the countries signed an agreement pledging to "explore mechanisms to promote bilateral cooperation in scientific and technological research and industrial innovation."

As Simões puts it, the two countries "share a vision for a transformative partnership" that also encompasses technological innovations, education and cooperation on the global stage.

LEADING THE GLOBAL SOUTH

In November, Xi and Lula reinforced their shared commitment to promoting a fairer, more equitable international order – particularly where the Global South is concerned. This geopolitical term refers mainly to countries in Africa, Asia, South America,

the Caribbean and Oceania with shared socioeconomic characteristics.

"In a world plagued by armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions, China and Brazil prioritise peace, diplomacy, and dialogue," Lula said in a speech during Xi's visit. The Chinese leader spoke of the importance of multilateralism, highlighting both China and Brazil's contributions combating climate change and tackling poverty through forums like the United Nations, G20 and BRICS.

Cultural exchange also forms an integral part of the Brazil-China relationship. Following the success of their 50th anniversary festivities, the two countries announced plans for a Brazil-China Cultural Year in 2026. This initiative aims to deepen mutual understanding and strengthen people-to-people connections – something Simões believes is "undoubtedly one of the most significant" facets of international relations.

Simões sees Xi's trip to Brazil as more than a celebration of the two countries' long-standing relationship. "The visit symbolises ... the search for a new balance in international relations, in the direction of a more just and equitable multipolar global governance," he says. ●

INFRASTRUCTURE

Game Changer: The Hengqin Line is Open

A new Light Rapid Transit line is changing the way Macao people live, work and travel. We examine how this 2.2-kilometre stretch of rail is helping accelerate the city's integration with the Greater Bay Area (GBA) through delivering on promises made by the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone.

Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

Macao's LRT system is still expanding. The East Line, terminating at the Border Gate, is the next major track scheduled to open

Travel between Macao and the mainland island of Hengqin has changed dramatically in the past few months. It's now possible to move between the two areas by rail, thanks to the latest addition to Macao's fast-growing Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, the Hengqin Line. Inaugurated on 2 December, the new line cuts journeys from the Special Administrative Region (SAR) to Hengqin Port down to just 30 minutes – about half the time it takes with a bus transfer from the Lotus Line in Taipa.

Comprising just two stations, a mere 2.2 kilometres in length, the Hengqin Line is small in stature. But it's an impressive feat of engineering nonetheless. After trundling overland from Lotus Station, the train dives beneath the Shizimen Waterway via a 900-metre-long tunnel before arriving at Hengqin Station.

The new railway's most important distinction is symbolic, however. At its opening ceremony, the head of the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Ho Cheong Kei, described the Hengqin Line as "of great significance" because it physically connects the SAR to the mainland. More than just a transit link, it stands as an important milestone in Macao's ongoing journey toward deeper integration with its motherland.

BENEFITING THE PEOPLE

Henry Lei, vice chairman of the Macau Economic Association and an associate professor in business economics at the University of Macau (UM), praises the new line's practicality. According to him, local uni students are already taking advantage of the convenient transport option by relocating to Hengqin, where accommodation tends to be more affordable. The LRT makes commuting to Macao-based universities a breeze, he says.

These students' quick embrace of lifestyle opportunities offered by the Hengqin Line could inspire other Macao residents to do the same, Lei tells *Macao* magazine. "[The line] could be an extra selling point to attract more people to move and settle in Hengqin, especially those who had hesitations before due to their concerns over transport convenience," he notes.

Of course, the new LRT is not only for commuters. It's also a game changer for people travelling to and from Macao, Hengqin, the broader mainland and even countries overseas. Considering the Central Government's recent decision to start granting multi-entry Macao visas to Hengqin and Zhuhai residents, the Hengqin Line is likely facilitating a rise in inbound tourism: good news for the economy. These one-year visas allow Zhuhai residents to make once-

weekly trips to the SAR for up to seven days, while Hengqin residents can travel to the city as often as they wish, for stays of up to seven days.

In terms of outbound tourism, the Hengqin Line is a handy way for Macao residents to reach Zhuhai Airport. This desirable aviation hub offers competitively priced flights to dozens of mainland destinations, some of which cannot be reached from the Macau International Airport (MIA). Lei himself plans to make use of the new LRT for his next holiday. He says he'll walk from his home to the nearest station (Jockey Club), take the Taipa Line to Lotus Station, transfer to the new line and disembark at Hengqin Port. From the mainland side of the border, he

can take either the interconnecting high-speed rail or a taxi direct to Zhuhai Airport.

The reverse is true for Zhuhai residents. While their local airport is well-connected domestically, Macao's offers international routes. Lei expects to see mainlanders start using the LRT to reach MIA, from where they can jet off to Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. This is how the Hengqin Line will help Macao enhance its reputation as a travel hub, he says.

THE ONE-HOUR LIVING CIRCLE

The Hengqin Line is one of many interconnecting infrastructure projects that have been taking place in Macao and

the broader GBA in recent years. It's a cog in what's often referred to as the 'one-hour living circle,' a cross-border initiative geared towards making it possible to travel between key regional cities, including Macao and Hong Kong, within a 60-minute time frame.

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) is another prime example. Stretching 55 kilometres across the Pearl River Estuary, the HZMB is the longest sea crossing in the world. Thanks to it, driving between the two SARs takes just 40 minutes. Another impressive project of a similar vein is the 24-kilometre Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link, which opened to traffic in June 2024. Much like the HZMB, this sea crossing – consisting of a pair of bridges, an underwater tunnel and two artificial islands – dramatically cuts travel time between Shenzhen and Zhongshan from the original two hours to just 30 minutes.

INTEGRATION IS A GO

Macao-mainland integration has been ramping up in recent years. It can feel like new cross-border initiatives relating to the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone are announced every week, most to do with tiny Macao expanding beyond its borders. The Cooperation Zone, located in Hengqin, was developed to give the city's people and businesses the space they need to continue to flourish.

For example, the Macau International Airport Company (CAM) recently announced its intention to build and operate an upstream cargo terminal in Hengqin. Speaking at the project's signing ceremony in December, CAM's chairman, Chan Weng Hong, described the new terminal as "enhancing Macao's aviation logistics capabilities and actively promoting economic development."

Almost half of the Hengqin Line is a tunnel running under the body of water that separates Macao's western flank from the mainland

(Opposite page) The Hengqin LRT connects Macao to the Hengqin Port, an entry point to the fast-developing Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone



Another major project on the horizon is UM's new campus in the Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, expected to be ready by August 2028. The facility will be able to accommodate 10,000 students across UM's medicine, information science and technology, design, and engineering faculties.

The SAR government is also encouraging Macao residents to move into purpose-built housing developments in Hengqin, like Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN). Completed in 2023, MNN comprises more than 4,000 residential units. Given the economic opportunities present in Hengqin, and the island's ever-increasing integration with Macao's public services, a substantial number of SAR residents have already made the move to MNN.

A more recent venture is the Cai Tang Yuan Macao government-subsidised rental housing project, construction of which kicked off last December. This development will eventually consist of about 3,000 units, as well as a range of commercial and public facilities.

To ensure projects like these work, there are solid government policies supporting cross-border movements behind them. The Central Government and relevant local authorities have been implementing a number of measures that make it easier for people, goods and even pets to travel between Macao and Hengqin.

While Macao and the mainland are separate customs regions under the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, a novel two-tier customs system was introduced in the Cooperation Zone last March.



Housing developments in Hengqin offer Macao residents cheaper living options and park-like surrounds

The first tier, on the Macao-Hengqin border, allows for tax-free trade within the zone. The second tier is between Hengqin and the rest of the mainland; goods crossing this are still subject to the usual tariffs and custom duties.

THE FUTURE OF MACAO'S LRT

With so many cross-border initiatives underway, it's a huge help to have the Hengqin Line up and running. But there's more to come from Macao's LRT system. In fact, the next new line scheduled to open will also boost the flow of people to and from the mainland. This is the East Line, a 7.7-kilometre railway track running from the Border Gate at the very top of Macao Peninsula, down through New Urban Zones A and E - which are located adjacent to Macao Peninsula's HZMB port and in Taipa's northeast, near the airport, respectively.

The East Line is already anticipated to be another game changer for Macao. The busy Border Gate is the main throughfare between the SAR and Zhuhai, making this track a convenient way for visiting mainlanders to reach Macao's airport and the Taipa Ferry Terminal - as well as the popular entertainment zone known as Cotai.

The East Line, expected to be operational in 2029, may be accompanied by an additional station at Qingmao Port. This port of entry that opened in 2021, to relieve some of the pressure on the Border Gate. As Lei puts it, "we cannot say the LRT is fully developed without the connection of this mass railway system to the Border Gate." ●



SPORTS

Rising Stars in the Sand

Anny Leong and Law Weng Sam represent Macao in beach volleyball, an emerging sport in the Special Administrative Region. Here's how the athletes moved from bumping and spiking on indoor courts to the shores of Hac Sa Beach. From there, they're looking to take on the world.

Text **Erico Dias**
Photos courtesy of **Anny Leong**
and **Law Weng Sam**

While indoor volleyball has long been popular in Macao, beach volleyball is beginning to have its time in the sun. Anny Leong and Law Weng Sam are two homegrown athletes helping the sport to grow. By day, Leong is a sports reporter and Law teaches physical education at a local high school. By night, you'll find the pair under the floodlights at Hac Sa Beach, perfecting their bumps, sets and spikes. Together, they form the team representing Macao in women's beach volleyball tournaments both within the region and on the international stage – including at the

19th Asian Games, which took place in 2023.

Leong and Law's volleyball journey started when they were 8 and 11 years old, respectively. For Leong, now 28, it all began with her older brother. "He was an indoor volleyball player and inspired me," she tells *Macao* magazine. "Since we studied at the same school, the coaches there thought I might have the same potential as him, so they suggested I join the volleyball team." Leong's height – 172 cm – and natural athleticism proved ideal for the game, which gradually started taking over her free time. Leong says she even gave up playing the piano to focus on her sport.

For Law, who is 26, the journey was a little more accidental. She played indoor volleyball during primary school, but it took awhile for the passion to kick in. "I never thought I would get this far in the sport," she admits. "I was actually in the dance team and my teacher didn't want me to play volleyball because it could affect my posture." Nevertheless, Law's talent eventually earned her an invitation onto her high school's volleyball team. "The more I played, the more I liked it," she explains.

Anny Leong (left) and Law Weng Sam (right) were first introduced to beach volleyball in 2014

(Opposite page) Now, the duo proudly represent Macao on beaches across the region



EMBRACING THE SAND

Leong and Law were both introduced to beach volleyball in 2014, via a competition at Hac Sa Beach organised by local coach Cheong Ka Chon. By 2016, the teenagers had partnered up and were training regularly together in the outdoor, two-side variant, while still competing in indoor competitions.

Beach volleyball's popularity grew in the region over the next few years, resulting in more opportunities for its enthusiasts. In 2019, Law abandoned indoor volleyball to focus fully on its sandy

counterpart. Leong continued playing both sports, serving as the captain of the Macao Women's Indoor Volleyball Team. "I still felt a strong sense of responsibility to represent Macao in indoor volleyball, and that's why I couldn't just walk away," she says.

That changed late last year, when a new rule was introduced by the East Asian Zonal Volleyball Association, which governs all types of volleyball in the region. It barred players from competing in more than one variant, forcing Leong to make a tough decision. In the end, she joined Law and committed to the beach format.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Beach volleyball evolved in the US and gained popularity along California's sunny shores during the early to mid-1900s. Like surfing, it became a staple of the 'Cali' lifestyle while slowly spreading around the world. The International Volleyball Federation, or Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), was founded in France in 1947; the first FIVB-sanctioned international tournament was held on Brazil's

Ipanema Beach 40 years later (the sport remains incredibly popular in the South American country). Beach volleyball was introduced to the Olympic Games as a demonstration event in 1992 and its Olympic status was made official in 1996.

The 2000s saw Chinese players start making their mark in the sport, with duos from the mainland earning both the silver and bronze medals for women's beach volleyball in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Interest didn't really start warming up in Macao

until the mid-2010s, however. That's when Cheong – currently the head coach of the Macao Women's Indoor Volleyball Team – began pushing for indoor players like Leong and Law to branch out into beach volleyball.

Local tournaments were being held regularly by 2015. Two beach volleyball tournaments are now held in Macao every year, one in May and the other in August. According to Leong and Law, these have been a game changer for the sport's growth in the city.



Beach volleyball is a very physical game, so Leong and Law dedicate a lot of their free time to keeping fit



“

Nothing is more important than match experience. We try to get out and compete whenever possible.

– Anny Leong



THE JOYS OF PLAYING OUTDOORS

The differences between indoor and beach volleyball go beyond their namesake venues. Indoor teams have six players, allowing for specialisation. Beach volleyball, on the other hand, is played in pairs, meaning each athlete has to be an excellent all-rounder. Mother nature’s influence on the outdoor variant – be that via wind, rain or scorching sun – adds an extra layer of unpredictability to its games, an aspect Leong and Law both relish.

Transitioning into beach volleyball wasn’t without its challenges for the women, mainly due to Covid-19 restrictions kicking in shortly after they started getting serious about the sport. The restrictions limited their ability to compete and travel, so they spent a lot of time training at home. “We couldn’t go out to join matches for at least a year and a half,” Leong laments.

These days, the athletes train at the University of Macau’s dedicated sand courts, on Hac Sa Beach (where there’s a permanent

net) and in Hong Kong, where beach volleyball is more established as a sport.

Leong and Law both love playing on a two-person team, citing the close camaraderie it fosters as a reason they opted to leave indoor volleyball behind. When it’s just the two of them, every win lies squarely on their combined four shoulders – making successful matches all the more sweet. Smaller teams also mean lower costs for competing abroad, and can make it easier to receive government support. This helps level the playing field on the international circuit, they say.

The pair train three times a week, on top of workout sessions at the gym. They also enter as many competitions as is feasible: “Nothing is more important than match experience,” Leong says. “We try to get out and compete whenever possible, especially since competition opportunities in Macao are limited.”

Leong and Law cherish the camaraderie of playing on a two person team

(Opposite page) The pair have represented Macao in several international tournaments around Asia, including the AVC Beach Tour Nuvali Open in the Philippines in April 2024

GIRL POWER

After nine years of playing together on the court, Law and Leong have strong chemistry. According to Law, communication and empathy are their biggest strengths. “Even when we’re not playing our best, we stay focused on supporting each other,” Law says. “I think that’s one of the reasons we’re able to perform well together.”

The pair agree that their most memorable match was beating Hong Kong’s team 2-0 at the 19th Asian Games last year, where they went on to be ranked 9th overall.

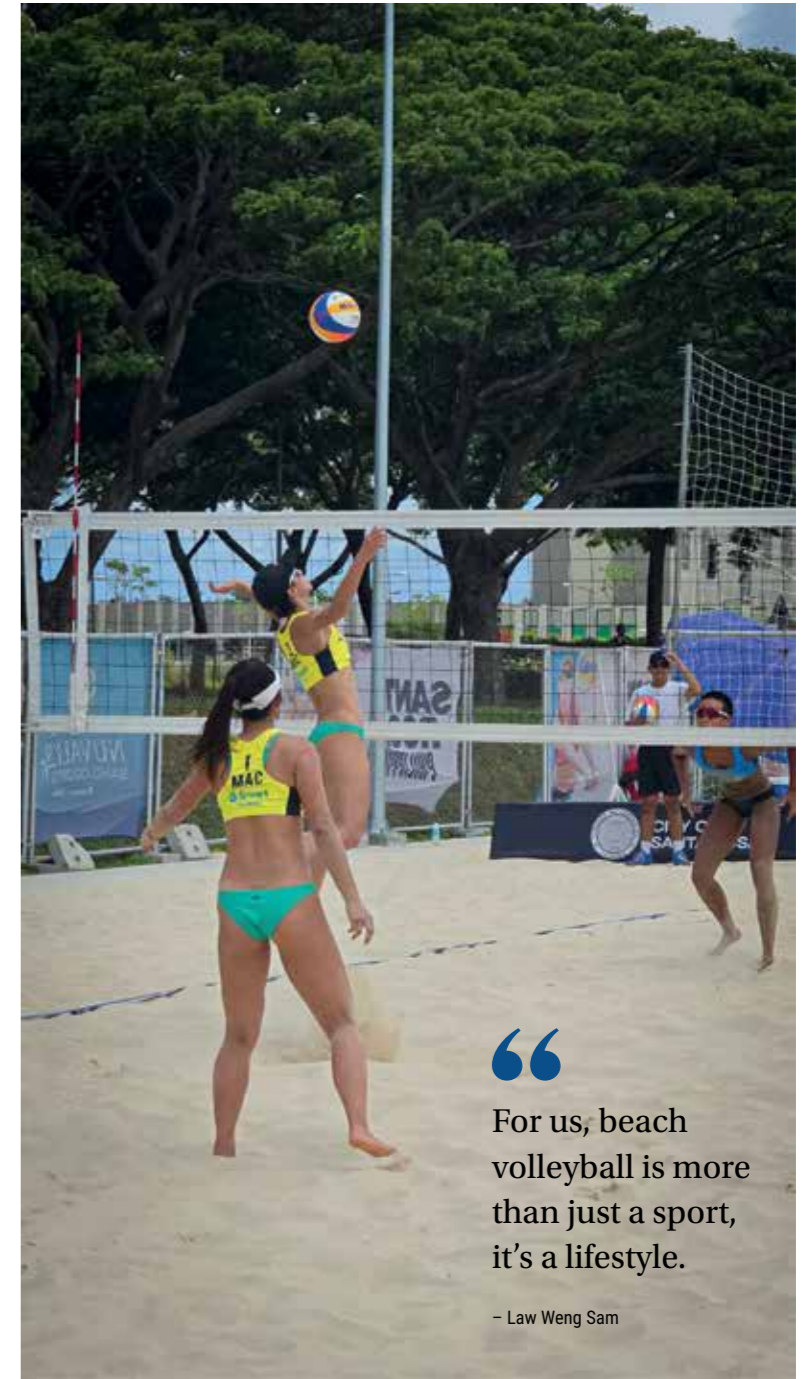
Unlike most sports, beach volleyball is female-dominated. As Leong puts it, “Women’s volleyball is actually more enjoyable to watch and it gets more attention on the international stage.” The FIVB maintains that volleyball in

general stands out as the most gender-equal team sport globally. Male and female players tend to receive equal pay and prize money pools (Leong suspects women are paid even better than men), evidence of the sport’s commitment to uplifting female athletes.

While this parity has helped beach volleyball attract diverse audiences and inspire young players, regardless of gender, to pursue the game, it does remain a niche sport in Macao – where indoor volleyball continues to dominate. Leong and Law have made it their mission to help beach volleyball achieve a more stable footing in the city.

To anyone hoping to follow in their footsteps, Leong and Law offer this advice: Be disciplined, stay focused and never give up. The pair hope to be seen as role models in the sport they are so passionate about. “For us, beach volleyball is more than just a sport, it’s a lifestyle,” says Law.

Looking ahead, Leong and Law have their sights set on the National Games. These are scheduled to take place in November, staged across Macao, Hong Kong and Guangdong Province. The pair will also compete in several international tournaments in the lead up to the games. “We’re always pushing ourselves to improve and represent Macao at the highest levels,” Leong says. ●



“
For us, beach volleyball is more than just a sport, it’s a lifestyle.”

– Law Weng Sam



FOOD & DRINK

Macao Street Food Makes the Michelin Guide

Local cook Lam Won Lun has taken a dim sum staple and made it his own. His innovative fare recently won over the taste buds of the Michelin Guide, earning the humble Lun Kee Rice Roll a spot on every foodie traveller's itinerary of Macao.

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

Lam Won Lun is Macao's
unofficial rice roll master, as
crowned by the Michelin Guide

Where's the best place to get a rice roll in Macao? Most people will point you to a shop declaring itself to purvey the city's "number one duck congee". Incongruous signage aside, rice roll maestro Lam Won Lun has captured the hearts of locals, travellers and celebrities, whose photos adorn his humble eatery's walls. And he does it all single-handedly.

The name of this hole-in-the wall better reflects what it's famous for: Lun Kee Rice Roll. Lam, now in his 50s, has been operating Lun Kee since 2012. Located in the city's Freguesia de Santo António neighbourhood, very near the Ruins of St Paul's, the eatery has become something of an online sensation in recent years.

Its latest claim to fame is a listing in the Michelin Guide. No, Lam hasn't earned a Michelin star. Nor has Lun Kee received a Bib Gourmand, the award bestowed upon friendly eateries offering good food at reasonable prices. But the shop does have a new official listing in what's recognised around the world as the bona fide foodie's bible. No one can deny that's kind of a big deal.

From an extensive menu, the guide's selected restaurants section singles out Lam's egg rice rolls, describing them as "simple but delicious, boasting [a] bouncy texture."

Lun Kee is a far cry from what most people expect from the Michelin Guide, which tends to be associated with fine dining. (Macao, incidentally, is home to 16 Michelin-starred restaurants. Those are the fancy ones). Step inside its tiny premises and you're hit by billowing steam and the sound of a blaring television. There are only three tables, each seating up to three customers; most people order takeaway.

The two big steamers responsible for Lam's rice rolls are at the front of the shop, while a congee station at the back accommodates the preparation of around a dozen different types of rice porridge. Of these, a Cantonese staple featuring lean pork, liver and kidneys is a firm favourite, Lam says. His menu also offers stir-fried noodles, deep-fried chicken wings and curried fish balls.

Asked how he manages to juggle all these dishes on his own, Lam tells *Macao* magazine that "everything comes down to time management."

ROLLING IN FLAVOUR

Back to the rice rolls. Conventional rice rolls are easy to find in Macao, typically in the form of thin, silken sheets of rice noodle rolled around fillings ranging from *char siu* to prawns, then bathed in soy sauce. But Lam's take on this traditional dim sum is subtly different. His sheets are noticeably thicker than others, and he shuns the use of soy sauce. According to Lam, most cooks apply soy sauce to enhance their rice rolls' silken texture – especially if they're not so soft to begin with. Lam has enough confidence in his ability to prepare perfect rolls, time after time, not to feel a need for it. Indeed, each rice roll from the Lun Kee steamer is springy and tender, and each bite melts in your mouth.

Popular fillings for standard rice rolls at Lun Kee include scallions, dried prawns, black truffle with prawns, beef, sweetcorn and char siu. And then there's the yolk-yellow egg rice roll. This option, garnished with bright green scallions, is particularly popular with food-themed influencers.

To make his rolls, Lam first places a permeable cloth on a steamer. Then he pours a finely tuned mixture of flour and water onto the fabric, resulting in a rectangular wrapper with an even thickness. After a short time steaming, Lam sprinkles his customer's choice of fillings over the sheet, before deftly rolling it up. You can then drizzle your preferred combo of sweet, spicy and sesame sauces over the snack.

"You can find rice rolls everywhere in Macao, but nobody else is innovative with them," Lam says. "I love studying food. I have been intensively improving my rice rolls for many years."



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You can find rice rolls everywhere in Macao, but nobody else is innovative with them.

– Lam Won Lun

STRIKING OUT ON HIS OWN

Lam's cooking career started 30 years ago, when he cut his teeth in the Cantonese restaurants of hotels like the Grand Hyatt Macau. When, in the early 2010s, he decided it was time to start his own business, he signed a lease for the very same premises he works out of today. Rice rolls hadn't been his specialty in the hotel kitchens, but Lam was drawn to them. Why? His answer is simple: "I like rice rolls and I wanted to make them for breakfast."

First came the experiments. Lam trialed lots of different recipes, adjusting them for taste and texture. After opening Lun Kee, he spent the first two days handing rice rolls out for free in order to harvest feedback from potential customers.

Not everyone loved those initial batches. Lam admits some of these guinea pigs bluntly told him his rolls were "awful". But Lam persevered. He reckons he perfected his basic recipe within three months.

One day, a customer asked Lam if he could whip up a batch of rice rolls with egg. Seizing the day, he dashed to the store across the road and bought a box of those critical ingredients. He then spent just a few seconds to figuring out how to actually make the custom order. "I ended up splitting the process into two sections, making the rice flour sheet first, and then laying the whisked eggs over it ... and it worked!" he explains. That was the birth of what's become a signature dish for Lun Kee.



Lam at work
in his steamy
kitchen



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Lam's on-the-fly recipe for egg rice rolls unexpectedly became his most popular order – earning him praise from foodies around the world

(Opposite page) Rice rolls are Lam's personal breakfast favourite, so he made it his mission to share them

Business boomed quickly and, for a few years, Lam recruited four staff members to help keep up with demand. Testament to his rice rolls' quality, busy times could see customers spend more than an hour queuing for a plate of his famous savoury snack.

A REGIONAL REPUTATION GROWS

Locals in the neighbourhood have been very supportive of his business, Lam says. He's also been chuffed to see his reputation as Macao's king of rice rolls spread beyond the city's borders. Press coverage in Hong Kong has been part of that, but it's Taiwanese foodies

posting their rice roll experiences online that seems to have made Lun Kee a must-visit on Macao itineraries. Lam estimates that around 60 percent of his customers hail from Taiwan these days.

Lun Kee's good name is spreading even further with its inclusion in the Michelin Guide. Many travellers turn to the guide when planning a trip to a new region, especially when visiting a UNESCO City of Gastronomy like Macao. Naturally, the Special Administrative Region is packed with renowned eateries to suit every taste and budget. Lun Kee – classified as street food by Michelin – is certainly at the affordable end of the spectrum,

rubbing shoulders with Lord Stow's Bakery (a celebrated purveyor of Macao's famous egg tarts) and Rua de Felicidade's multi-generational noodle shop, Cheong Kei.

In the Bib Gourmand category, foodies can find the Macao University of Tourism's Educational Restaurant, famed for its Macanese buffet each Saturday, the authentic Portuguese restaurant O Castiço and a range of excellent value Chinese options.

When it comes to the *crème de la crème* of Macao's dining scene, those eateries that have earned Michelin stars, things can get very fancy. To illustrate: At Jade Dragon, a three-starred Cantonese restaurant in Cotai, the guide gushes that while its "Chinese art, ebony, crystal, jade, gold and silver are all used to great effect, they don't outshine the food". The cuisine in these categories hails from around the world. Macao Peninsula's Robuchon au Dôme (also three-starred) boasts a contemporary French degustation menu and one of the best wine lists in Asia, according to the Michelin Guide. Two-starred Mizumi, in the NAPE district, serves up a *kaiseki* set menu for the ultimate Japanese fine dining experience, while one-starred 8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana, in Cotai, offers Sicilian fare to "awaken the taste buds".

Interestingly, Lam only found out he was rubbing shoulders with such illustrious establishments when customers from countries like Malaysia started telling him how they'd found out about Lun Kee. He has no idea who the Michelin tasters who paid him a visit even were: "I guess they just came as customers and found my rice rolls delicious," he laughs.

Lam takes great pride in his culinary creations, and doesn't think it's a stretch to say he's helped revive a classic dim sum's popularity with his innovative approach. To him, the future – his own and the rest of Macao's dining scene – looks bright. "The market is recovering," he says. "With the government's support and the huge potential of our food and drink industry, there's still room for growth ... as long as we maintain the quality of our dishes and provide excellent customer service." ●



ARTS & CULTURE

Theatre, Tradition and Technology Meet in *Macau 2049*

Macao is home to a new resident theatre show, directed by one of the country's great creatives: Zhang Yimou. In combining the ancient arts of lion dance and throat singing with holograms, flying manta rays and humanoid robots, Zhang aims to "present China's cultural richness in a way that resonates with new generations" while cultivating Macao's reputation as a City of Performing Arts.

Text and photos
Elói Carvalho

Metallic manta rays swoop
above audiences attending
Zhang Yimou's first Greater
Bay Area residency show,
Macau 2049

The debut of acclaimed filmmaker Zhang Yimou's latest theatre production marks a defining moment in Macao's evolution as a world-class destination for performing arts. *Macau 2049* blends Chinese heritage with state-of-the-art technology; storytelling with raw spectacle. Its central message is clear: tradition and innovation can coexist, thriving together to shape the future. The production invites audiences to reflect on how modern advancements can enhance, rather than overshadow, cultural identities.

Zhang, an iconic member of China's 'fifth generation' of filmmakers, is renowned for elevating Chinese cinema abroad through works like *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). However, his expertise extends beyond film. Zhang orchestrated the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and has directed numerous other live productions,

earning a reputation for grand, visually stunning storytelling.

Macau 2049 is Zhang's first residency theatre production being performed in China's Greater Bay Area.

A CELEBRATION OF HISTORY AND VISION

The 80-minute show was conceived to celebrate two significant milestones: the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland. Its December 2024 premiere coincided with Macao's commemoration of its quarter century as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China.

Macau 2049 looks ahead another 25 years, across the period in which the SAR is set to complete its full reintegration with the mainland. As such, it can be interpreted as a bridge between past, present and future.

(Opposite page, top to bottom)
A singer performs 'khoomei',
a style of throat singing found
in Inner Mongolia; Storytellers
from northern Shaanxi Province
salute the crowd in the show's
closing act

Golden balls cascade behind
performers while high tech lasers
dazzle the audience during *Macao
2049*'s inaugural show

PORTRAYING CHINA AS A MULTICULTURAL TAPESTRY

Macao 2049 does not just entertain its audiences, it offers an education into the diversity and depth of Chinese culture. Each segment portrays different aspects of this richness, combining traditional folk arts with futuristic elements that

transform the whole theatre into an almost magical realm for the senses.

The opening chapter, 'Drumming. Shadows,' introduces the audience to the *hua'er*, a genre of folk music from China's northwest that's known for its soulful melodies. The segment's choreography, pairing live dancers with robotic arms to perform a pas de deux, plays on

the interconnection between past and future.

Next, 'Khoomei. Ethereal' transports viewers to the steppes of Inner Mongolia through the hypnotic art of throat singing. This chapter's visual effects evoke the region's natural beauty. It is followed by 'Miao Songs. Transcendent', where laser lights synchronise with the emotive songs of the Miao people, offering a spellbinding homage to this mountain-dwelling ethnic group from southwestern China.

The fourth chapter, 'The Crossroads Inn. Masks,' explores the vibrant tradition of Peking opera, blending its theatrical grandeur with a narrative that emphasises the warmth of human connection. Next, 'Yangge. Robots' manages to convey the essence of Yangge folk dance, known for its lively, joy-filled movements. This enduringly popular style of dance dates back around 1,000 years, having developed during the Song dynasty (960-1279).

Then, 'Yi Song. Ocean' ushers in a pair of gigantic flying manta rays, swooping above an audience bathed in blue light. The metallic models move to the sound of traditional songs from southwestern China's Yi people, creating a truly otherworldly experience.

The penultimate act, 'Lion Dance. Radiance,' reinvents its namesake ancient artform. Performers in elaborate costumes interact with a kinetic lion sculpture on stage, again melding tradition with technology to bring this beloved and auspicious dance to life.



Macau 2049 winds down with 'Storytelling. Origin,' a poignant tribute to people from Shaanxi Province. This final segment is a fusion of music and storytelling, lasers and stunning visual projections that transport the audience into the fields and villages of the region while highlighting the optimistic resilience of its people.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Zhang collaborated closely with a wide range of illustrious names in the international arts arena to pull his ambitious show together. Its choreography is led by Sang Jijia, of Hong Kong's City Contemporary Dance Company, while Beijing's Grammy-winning rock star Wu Tong serves as the music director. British holographics expert Dominic Faraway



is the visual director, and Bernard Prentice - also from the UK - is in charge of underwater photography. The talented production team also includes hundreds of cast members and behind-the-scenes personnel, testament to its scale.

PRESENTING MACAO AS A CITY OF PERFORMING ARTS

At *Macau 2049*'s opening in December, Zhang stressed the importance of uniting tradition and innovation in the arts. He emphasised his own hope to "present China's cultural richness in a way that resonates with new generations" through each chapter of the production

"If we look at the progression of civilisation through a linear lens, one end represents 5,000 years of ancient civilisation, while the other

symbolises a future driven by rapid technological advancement.

"*Macau 2049* brings together the two extremes of time and space, converging the horizons of East and West. We seek harmony without uniformity, celebrating the diversity of civilisations around the world."

The show is being performed at Cotai's MGM Theatre. MGM China's chairperson and executive director, Pansy Ho, has described it as an important step forward for the SAR, a mean of strengthening an "identity as a centre of creativity and innovation". Speaking to media at *Macau 2049*'s opening performance, she highlighted the city's efforts to enhance its reputation as a City of Performing Arts.

Indeed, *Macau 2049* affirms Macao's potential as an artistic hub for the Asian continent. As the city further embeds itself as an integral part of the Greater Bay Area, this production underscores the complementary roles Macao can play as a protector of cultural identity and a pioneer of artistic innovation within the region.

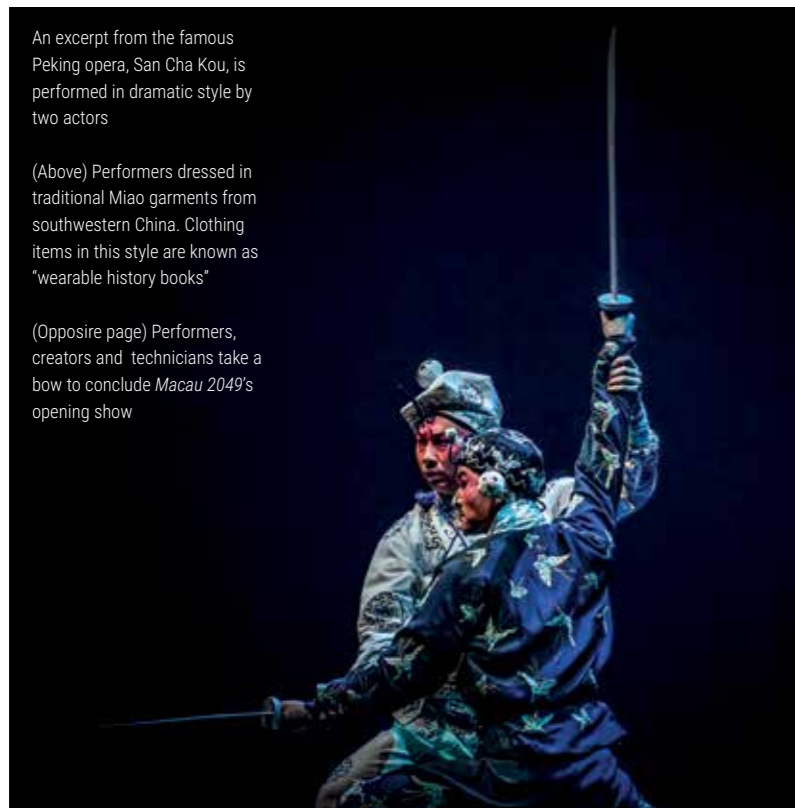
Through entwining legacies like hua'er with cutting-edge innovations in stage-craft, the performance will surely leave lasting impressions with all who experience it. Perhaps the most significant of these is that Macao's own unique cultural identity is safe in the embrace of its motherland, for the next quarter century and beyond. ●

Macau 2049 is scheduled to run five evenings a week throughout its residency at MGM Theater. It is performed in eight languages, with Cantonese narration being simultaneously translated on screens into Mandarin, Portuguese, French, Thai, English, German, Japanese and Korean.

An excerpt from the famous Peking opera, *San Cha Kou*, is performed in dramatic style by two actors

(Above) Performers dressed in traditional Miao garments from southwestern China. Clothing items in this style are known as "wearable history books"

(Opposite page) Performers, creators and technicians take a bow to conclude *Macau 2049*'s opening show



SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Macao's Pink Dolphins are 'Our Friends and Neighbours'

Two local conservationists, Ken Kwan and Viena Mak, speak with *Macao* magazine about their experiences with these charismatic marine mammals, whose playful antics win over the hearts of all who encounter them.

Text **Cathy Lai**

Born a dark gray colour, Chinese white dolphins gain their mottled pink hue as the mature

Ken Kwan is a Macao-born wildlife conservationist who conducts regular surveys at observation points along Coloane's Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail. Hugging the shoreline south of Hac Sa Beach, this popular hike is known for its large rock formations and stunning sea views. It's also a reliable place to spy Chinese white dolphins – perhaps the most iconic marine mammal roaming the Pearl River Estuary. In spite of its name, the species is best-known for its bubblegum pink skin, though colouration does vary by individual.

Kwan recalls feeling his anxiety levels rise while out on an observation mission last year, as he hadn't seen a dolphin in four days. Then, out of nowhere, two distinctive dorsal fins broke the water's surface just 10 metres offshore. As he watched, he realised they belonged to a pod of five dolphins, including a calf. The sight made his heart soar.

The group swam as close as 3 metres from the shore, Kwan recalls. The 27-year-old could tell they were chasing fish, and was close enough to hear the whooshing sounds as they exhaled through their blowholes. He even believes he locked eyes with one curious individual.

"They put on a great show of breaching, which is a hunting behaviour when they break out of the water then crash down hard on the water's surface," Kwan recounts to

Macao magazine. "Witnessing that, on that day, was one of the most magical encounters of my life."

The Chinese white dolphin, also known as the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, is classified as a first-class state-protected species in China and as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. The species shares these statuses with giant pandas, sperm whales, sun bears and snow leopards, among others. First-class state protection is the highest level of legal protection wildlife can get under China's Wildlife Protection Law, in place to preserve the country's precious natural heritage.

While a Chinese white dolphin was used as a mascot during Hong Kong's return to the motherland in 1997, the species is also a familiar sight in Macao, where pods swim in waters off the city's eastern and southern coastlines. The dolphins, whose core habitat spans from the Macau International Airport to southern Coloane, hold a special place in the hearts of Macao residents.

A FATEFUL ENCOUNTER

Kwan's journey into marine conservation began in his childhood. He explains it as a calling in part predestined by his Chinese name, Hok In, which means 'to learn from nature.' "I was also just fascinated by wild animals," he says. "Chasing insects and reading animal books were my favorite pastimes."

After completing degrees in conservation and wildlife biology in Australia, Kwan returned to Macao to dedicate his skills to protecting local fauna – whether it be bird, reptile or sea creature. Kwan’s interest in Chinese white dolphins began in 2019, after spying a mother dolphin and her calf for the first time, near Long Chao Kok. “Seeing such majestic and vulnerable animals in my hometown meant a lot to me,” he recalls. “It solidified my commitment to their conservation.”

Since then, Kwan has focussed on finding out all he can about this unique dolphin species. The mission has brought him in close contact with Macao’s fishermen, whom he says have taught him a lot about the dolphins’ habits. The dolphins are known to follow fishing boats, snapping up any fish and shrimp that escapes the nets.

His research also involves systematic surveys conducted from land-based observation points like those along Long Chao Kok. Using binoculars and a camera equipped with a telephoto lens, Kwan meticulously scans the water for unusual movements and pale dorsal fins. Every time the conservationist spots a dolphin, he makes a record – jotting down the time and exact location, along with details like how many individuals were present, how old they appeared to be, and what they were doing.

Between January and June 2024, Kwan recorded 21 groups of dolphins. Most appeared to be hunting for seasonal prey, socialising and finding a mate – behaviours Kwan knew were associated with migration. “My findings are consistent with previous studies, which proves that the area is an important migratory corridor for the dolphins,” he says.



The right equipment makes it possible for Ken Kwan to monitor dolphins from land

“

Seeing such majestic and vulnerable animals in my hometown meant a lot to me.

– Ken Kwan

DOLPHINS OF THE PEARL RIVER

While Chinese white dolphins are not exclusive to China (the species also inhabits the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean), they are mainly found in the country’s waters. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Hong Kong estimates that the population of Chinese white dolphins in the Pearl River Estuary is around 2,500 individuals, meaning it has the highest concentration of Chinese white dolphins in all of China. The area also boasts six out of the country’s seven dedicated Chinese White Dolphin Nature Reserves.

The purpose of these reserves goes beyond protecting the dolphins, however. They also aim to prevent land-based pollutants entering the sea, promote the creation and restoration of mangroves, protect coral reefs and seagrass beds, and ensure the sustainable use of fishery resources.

Chinese white dolphins are born dark gray, but quickly lighten and develop spots as they mature. The spots eventually fade into a pearly pink hue that can appear almost white in certain lights. Interestingly, the dolphins’ colour is not due to pigment in their skin – but from overdeveloped blood vessels just beneath their epidermis, which play a crucial role in regulating their body temperature. The effect is similar to a human’s blush. Chinese white dolphins share their colouration with the Amazon river dolphin, a freshwater species in South America.

Typically found in close-knit groups of four or so individuals, the Pearl River Estuary species is notable for its keen intelligence and intensely gregarious lifestyle. While youngsters are known to be especially playful, adults are also high-spirited and frolicsome. The animals appear to enjoy tail-slapping, swimming along on their sides, leaping out of the water to land with a splash, and something called ‘spy hopping’ – where they poke their heads and often flippers out of the sea to survey their surroundings.

Before their calves are weaned, mother dolphins appear to take teaching their babies the facts of life very seriously. Kwan once witnessed what he believes was a dolphin lesson, where a mother materialised with her calf about 300 metres offshore from where he was standing. The pair swam past Kwan's observation point, then the mother suddenly made a sharp U-turn and swam directly towards him – her baby, less than a year old, following closely behind.

"They lingered about 10 or 15 metres offshore, surfacing together several times before heading south again," he recalls. "I think the mother dolphin did this deliberately; she was probably teaching the calf a lesson about what a human looks like."

Once weaned, the calves leave their mums to interact with dolphins from outside their original pod, and eventually either join or form new groups. Chinese white dolphins do not typically mate for life.

THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

Viena Mak, vice-chair of the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS), has been studying Chinese white dolphins since 2012. One of the 33-year-old Macao-born conservationist's favourite parts of monitoring the mammals watching them hunt. "The dolphins swim forward, lean right and left, and sometimes circle quickly, never moving in one straight direction," she describes to *Macao* magazine. Mak says that observing the interactions between predator and prey is always a thrill.

To track the dolphins, Mak climbs mountains (for a better view of the sea) and wades through water (to get up close). She's become so familiar with the individuals hanging out in local waters, that she can identify several of them based on the shapes of their dorsal fins, color patterns and scars.

While most of her research has been conducted in Hong Kong, Mak also collaborates with Kwan to observe dolphins in the waters of Macao. On one memorable

occasion, the pair witnessed dolphins breaching multiple times as they chased fish towards the shore.

'OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS'

Despite their intelligence, Chinese white dolphins face challenges. According to Mak, these include pollution from industrial waste and debris, and underwater noises that disrupt their ability to communicate and echolocate (dolphins identify an object's location by reflected sound, a process known as echolocation). Fortunately, both Kwan and Mak have observed

growing public interest in the dolphins in recent years – in part through their own, and their peers', efforts.

For instance, HKDCS has been raising awareness through sharing infographics about the dolphins on social media. The society also collaborates with different companies and schools in Macao, promoting hands-on conservation to local children and their parents.

Kwan is a passionate proponent of ecological education and facilitates a myriad of activities around this theme in Macao. He leads bird watching expeditions, wildlife tours under the

moonlight and wetland explorations, for starters. One of Kwan's tours is at Coloane's Pavilion of Animal Specimens, which boasts the skeleton of a Chinese white dolphin. In all these educational initiatives, Kwan's aim is to get people reflecting on the close-knit relationship between humans, flora and fauna.

He goes so far as to describe dolphins as the "true indigenous people of Macao", poetically emphasising the marine mammals' historical presence in the region and the importance of ecological stewardship. According to Kwan, "they are our friends and neighbours." ●

Picking out mature Chinese white dolphins is a lot easier than spotting the much darker youngsters



GREATER BAY AREA

Fancy a trip to Shenzhen?

Guangdong Province's Silicon Valley is just an hour away from Macao by ferry, and offers so much more than mega-offices and tech parks. We take you on a tour that shows off the city's creativity and natural environment, from its cutting-edge contemporary art museum to a mangrove forest brimming with migratory birds.



Text **Kenny Fong**
and **Amanda Saxton**

Although it is known the world over as a tech hub, Shenzhen boasts a wealth of green spaces and world class cultural facilities

As one of the nine cities and two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) within southern China's Greater Bay Area (GBA), Macao benefits from close ties with the other urban areas making up this vibrant megalopolis. Shenzhen is one of these, known as the country's Silicon Valley for its thriving tech industry, innovation hubs and numerous boundary-pushing startups. But the city of nearly 18 million people is also full of surprises. It boasts a picturesque, long coastline that's frequented by migratory birds. Some of the world's best museums and galleries are located there. And it's home to an otherworldly bookstore that feels akin to stepping into a dream.

Happily, it's never been easier for Macao residents to visit Shenzhen. While ethnic Chinese residents have always been able to obtain what's known as a 'home-return permit' for trips to the motherland, that privilege was extended to Macao's non-Chinese permanent residents last year – when the Central Government began granting mainland travel permits to foreign passport holders

living in both SARs. According to a statement from the national Exit and Entry Administration, the move was designed to “improve communication and exchanges” between the people of Macao, Hong Kong and the mainland. Many travellers in Macao also find venturing into the mainland a breeze these days, with China having extended its unilateral visa-free entry policy to eligible citizens from dozens of countries, including Australia and much of Europe.

Naturally, Shenzhen is a priority city for all kinds of visits. It's great for a day trip, the weekend or a longer holiday. Travelling between Macao and the Guangdong powerhouse is simple. By boat tends to be the preferred option, taking just 60 minutes from either of the SAR's two ferry terminals. But there are also bus and rail connections (take the train from Zhuhai Station). Once in Shenzhen, a well-developed metro system makes navigating the city very straightforward.

Without further ado, here are the sights and experiences *Macao* magazine recommends for a stimulating Shenzhen excursion.



Qiongha Liao

MOCAPE opened in 2017 as part of the master plan for the Futian Cultural District, the new urban center of Shenzhen.

SOAK UP THE SUN AT DAMEISHA BEACH PARK

Now one of the easiest stretches of Shenzhen’s shore to visit, Dameisha Beach Park has had its own metro station for just over a year. The beach is incredibly popular with locals, who like to sunbathe, swim and snap photographs there. Don’t worry

about packing a picnic, food stalls peddling green coconuts and grilled meat on skewers are plentiful.

The most unique thing at this beach are its art installations: a number of massive, dancing angel-like figures dot the yellow sand, adding a touch of whimsy to a day at Dameisha. Another point of interest is the 81-metre-high Wish Tower, looming tall at the beach’s centre, designed for observation and meditation. For more of an adrenaline rush, try parasailing, speed boating or scuba diving at a nearby island.

Shenzhen has no shortage of beaches, but few can match the spectacle of Dameisha Beach Park

(Opposite page) MOCAPE features a sprawling steel and glass ceiling, and lots of reflective surfaces

VISIT THE SHENZHEN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART & PLANNING EXHIBITION

Even from the outside, the Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art & Planning Exhibition (abbreviated to MOCAPE) is nothing short of spectacular. This shimmering, somewhat transparent urban landmark was designed by the avant-garde Austrian architecture firm Coop Himmelb(l)au to give visitors the sense they are in a “gently shaded outdoor area”, rather than indoors. From the outside, the structure resembles a cumulus cloud made of chrome.

At a sizable 91,000 square metres, MOCAPE is not one but two museums – conjoined. Its Museum of Contemporary Art showcases Chinese and international works in Asia’s biggest indoor art exhibition space. The Planning Exhibition, meanwhile, explores Shenzhen’s remarkable trajectory over the past five decades. Since being designated a Special Economic Zone in 1980, Shenzhen has transformed itself from little more than a collection of fishing villages into a global hub for manufacturing, innovation and technology, becoming a magnet for migrants and entrepreneurs in the process.

Chintung Lee





K. Shun

GET CULTURAL AT THE OCT-LOFT CREATIVE CULTURE PARK

Once an industrial estate, the Overseas Chinese Town (OCT)-LOFT Creative Culture Park has morphed into Shenzhen's bohemian quarter. It's where locals and visitors come to browse contemporary art spaces and design shops, listen to live music and relax at trendy cafés. Many of these venues are housed in refurbished factories, lending an edgy industrial aesthetic to the area.

As a member of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, Shenzhen is one of the mainland's leading design cities. OCT-LOFT is the perfect place to see the craft side of that in action: local jewellers, fashion designers and all manner of makers have set up shop in the warren-like compound.

The park hosts many events throughout the year, including the OCT-LOFT Jazz Festival, the OCT-LOFT Art Film Screening Project and the Bàng! Children's Art Festival.

MARVEL AT THE SHENZHEN ZHONGSHUGE BOOKSTORE

The mainland is home to Zhongshuge, one of the world's most beautiful bookstore chains. Each outlet is an architectural masterpiece in its own right, and the Shenzhen branch - which opened in 2021 - is no exception. With an interior designed by the award-winning Shanghai-based firm X+Living, the space is dominated by a surreally spiraling bookcase. Its floor is subtly mirrored, giving the impression of an endless labyrinth of literature upon stepping inside the store.

Those visiting Shenzhen with kids will find its Zhongshuge especially enchanting, as it has a dedicated children's reading area.



Rick Siu



Lukes

GO BIRDING AROUND SHENZHEN BAY PARK

'Tis the season to go birding, with millions of migratory avians opting to spend the winter months in Shenzhen. The city is located on the East Asian-Australasia Flyway, which sees most of its traffic from November to March. Locals know Shenzhen Bay Park is the premium place to spy visiting Eurasian spoonbills, grey herons, great and little egrets, pied avocets, red-billed gulls and more.

The lush greenspace covers more than 100 hectares of former tidal flats between Nanshan and Futian

districts. Footpaths and cycling lanes wend their way through the park, with plenty of room for relaxing and enjoying the view. No motor vehicles are allowed here, making for a uniquely peaceful experience within bustling Shenzhen.

The park's adjacent mangrove forest - the only nature reserve of its kind in an urban area of China - is another bird haven worth exploring. It's a vital part of Shenzhen's ecosystem, harbouring approximately 200 bird species, including the at-risk Dalmatian pelican and black-faced spoonbill. ●

Shenzhen Bay Park is the winter residence of many migratory birds

(Opposite page, top to bottom) The OCT-LOFT Creative Culture Park is now one of the nerve centres of creativity and art in Shenzhen; Shenzhen Zhongshuge has a dreamlike interior setting it apart from all other bookstores in the city



ZOOM

25 Years of Macao: Flags, Fireworks and Festivity

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

- ① The festivities drew crowds young and old to celebrate in the glittering streets of Macao
- ② The solemn atmosphere around the ceremonial flag-raising gave way to a more lively mood felt across the rest of the anniversary

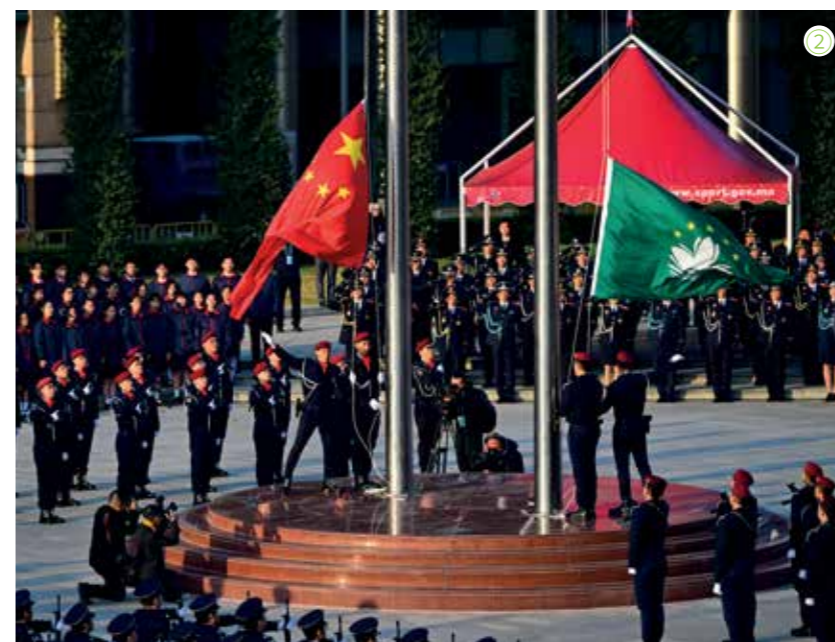
Macao marked the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland with a series of joyful celebrations that brought the whole city together. The milestone was formally commemorated on 20 December with a solemn flag-raising ceremony, where the national flag of the People's Republic of China and the flag of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) were hoisted together, against a backdrop of exuberant festivity.

Throughout the city, streets, squares and iconic landmarks were transformed by colorful decorations, proudly displaying the two emblems: one red, the other green. Public and private buildings were adorned with patriotic symbols, and even vehicles joined the historic occasion, with many cars flying the flags, too.

The Ruins of St Paul's, the Leal Senado, Lotus Flower Square and the city's beautifully maintained gardens became focal points for residents and tourists alike. Thousands gathered to enjoy the special atmosphere, which coincided with the Christmas season – adding an extra layer of cheer in Macao as 2024 drew to a close. For several days, families and friends shared memories and snapped photographs to commemorate the past quarter century.

The spectacular fireworks display over the city skies provided a fitting finale, drawing awe and applause from onlookers.

President Xi Jinping visited Macao during this time, to oversee the swearing-in of the sixth-term SAR government led by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai. While in the city, Xi met with residents across the board, from students to professionals and officials. He reaffirmed the Central Government's support for Macao, fostering the spirit of shared destiny. ●





③ A grand gala at the Macao East Asian Games Dome was held to mark the occasion

④ Displays throughout the city ensured that no corner of Macao was left out of the fun



Macaulink



⑤ One family captures a fun photo in front of a celebratory display

- ⑥ Celebrations extended into the city's well-kept gardens, where visitors bundled up in the relative cool of winter
- ⑦ Poinsettias add a seasonal flair to the festivities, welcoming visitors to Macao's historic city centre
- ⑧ Families marked the occasion together, documenting their own place in Macao's history – and future





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- ⑨ The city's most famous landmark, the Ruins of St Pauls, was decked out with a commemorative sign
- ⑩ A brilliant pyrotechnics display lit up the late December night sky, bringing the SAR's 25th anniversary celebrations to a memorable end



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金鱗昇輝 歡樂春節

2025農曆新年花車匯演
Parada de Celebração do Ano da Cobra
Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Snake

正月初三
01.31
20:00-21:45
路線
Percurso
Route

正月十一
02.08
20:00-21:30
路線
Percurso
Route

西灣湖廣場
Praça do Lago Sai Van
Sai Van Lake Square

孫逸仙大馬路
Av. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen

澳門科學館
Centro de Ciência de Macau
Macao Science Center

澳門漁人碼頭
Doca dos Pescadores de Macau
Macao Fisherman's Wharf

青洲河邊馬路
Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde

青洲大馬路
Av. do Conselheiro Borja

拱形馬路
Estrada do Arco

黑沙環馬路
Estrada da Areia Preta

慕拉士大馬路
Av. de Vençislau de Morais

黑沙環第四街
Rua Quatro do Bairro da Areia Preta

長壽大馬路
Av. da Longevidade

市場街
Rua do Mercado de Iao Hon

祐漢街市公園
Jardim do Mercado do Iao Hon
Iao Hon Market Park



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文化局暨旅遊局
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