

Macao 澳門

University Town

BUILDING A GLOBAL HUB FOR TALENT

Designed to support economic diversification, the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town marks a major milestone in Macao's efforts to nurture future generations



Galloping into
Chinese New Year
the Macao way



Kai Fong: Empowering
neighbourhoods
from the ground up



Fong Man Wai inspires
future athletes with
National Games gold win

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Through the Investor's "One-stop Service", IPIM provides comprehensive support and assistance to investors who are implementing investment projects in Macao, and designates staff to follow up the project throughout the company incorporation procedures, from simple consultation to assisting in the implementation of various administrative procedures involved in the investment projects.



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China-PSC Business Compass Service



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Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute

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Kai Fong at the heart of the community

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Fong Man Wai's rise to national glory

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CE urges officials to follow President Xi's policy directions

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai called on Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government officials and senior civil servants to adhere closely to the guiding principles set out in the series of speeches on Macao by President Xi Jinping, stressing their importance in shaping government priorities.

Speaking in January at a meeting of principal and bureau-level officials, Mr Sam said the MSAR Government must continue to implement the spirit of President Xi's important speeches and align its deployment of policy accordingly. The meeting brought together more than 70 senior officials, including all MSAR Government secretaries and bureau heads.



Mr Sam used the occasion to relay key messages from his duty visit to Beijing in December, during which President Xi urged the MSAR Government to align actively with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan.

The January meeting marked the first annual work summary

session for MSAR officials at bureau level and above. Mr Sam said the work-summary format would become a regular exercise, aimed at strengthening internal coordination, improving institutional development and enhancing the overall efficiency of Macao's governance.

Swifter clearance for eligible foreigners at HKZM Bridge

Foreign nationals travelling by land between the Chinese mainland and Macao are to benefit from swifter boundary-crossing procedures, following the opening to them of joint inspection automated immigration clearance channels at the Zhuhai-Macao Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao (HKZM) Bridge.

The new arrangement allows eligible foreign passport holders to use self-service clearance facilities previously reserved for Chinese nationals, marking another step in efforts by Macao and Zhuhai authorities to streamline cross-boundary travel. The expansion builds on a pilot scheme introduced in October 2024 at Hengqin Port.

To be entitled to use the joint inspection automated channels, foreign travellers must be aged seven or over, be at least 1.2 metres tall, and hold a valid foreign passport alongside either a Macao Resident Identity Card, or a residency permit or identity card issued by the People's Republic of China, among other criteria. Advance registration is mandatory.

China Development Bank makes bond market debut in Macao

China Development Bank's Hong Kong branch made its first foray into Macao's bond market, issuing 5.5 billion yuan in publicly-offered policy-bank bonds in the city in late January. It was the first such type of instrument to be issued in Macao.

It was also the first bond offering in the city to be themed around the "Belt and Road" initiative and Macao's bridging role with Portuguese-speaking

countries and regions. The issuance followed earlier landmark deals in Macao, including sovereign bonds and municipal government bonds.

The China Development Bank bonds were targeted at professional investors and were issued in two tranches: a three-year themed bond of 3.5 billion yuan with a coupon rate of 1.75 percent, and a five-year themed bond of 2 billion yuan offering a coupon of 1.85 percent.

BY THE NUMBERS

417.28 billion patacas

Macao's GDP for the whole of 2025, up 4.7 percent year-on-year in real terms

0.33%

The city's inflation rate for full-year 2025

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS TOP HONOURS AWARDED

In late January, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai conferred decorations, medals, and certificates of merit on a total of 28 individuals, organisations, and other entities. The awards recognised personal achievement, community contribution, and distinguished service to the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR). The honours list included Mr Sam's predecessor as chief executive, Ho Iat Seng, and the former president of the Legislative Assembly, Kou Hoi In, both of whom received the Grand Lotus decoration of honour – the MSAR's highest distinction. ■



REGIONAL INTEGRATION

UNIVERSITY TOWN IN HENGQIN SET TO REDEFINE HIGHER EDUCATION

Text **Tony Lai**

Macao is investing in a new **University Town in Hengqin** to anchor its talent-driven future, as the city positions itself as a rising centre for innovation and research. The project brings together three public universities in a purpose-built education zone by 2030, reflecting Macao's long-term vision to diversify its economy through education, science, and technology





As cities around the region race to attract talent and strengthen their innovation ecosystems, Macao is making a strategic bet on its diversified future. The city is moving fast to develop the Macao–Hengqin International Education (University) Town, an ambitious project designed to turn the city into a regional hub for research, learning, and high-end talent cultivation.

Set to open in three phases through 2030, the initiative brings together Macao’s established academic institutions and the spatial advantages of neighbouring Hengqin, part of Zhuhai Municipality in Guangdong Province on the Chinese mainland, thus creating a cross-boundary platform for educational collaboration and innovation. The project, according to the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government, aims to support the city’s long-term economic diversification and deepen its integration into national development.

At the core of the initiative are three of Macao’s public universities: the University of Macau (UM), Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM). These institutions will establish new campuses within the Guangdong–Macao Intensive

Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, with a combined capacity to accommodate more than 20,000 students, said Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai when he presented the Policy Address for 2026 in November.

The University Town is described as one of four landmark infrastructure projects aimed at boosting Macao’s development. According to the official blueprint, the Ministry of Education has given the green light for the three universities to establish their respective campuses in Hengqin, with the MSAR Government pledging full support to ensure these campuses uphold the same academic quality and standards as their home institutions in Macao.

In a meeting with the Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng last year, Mr Sam reaffirmed Macao’s commitment to expanding international cooperation in higher education and deepening regional academic collaboration, according to a Government press release.

“The MSAR Government remains committed to the policy vision of ‘developing Macao through education and strengthening Macao through talent’,” the city’s leader was quoted saying in the meeting.

Mr Sam said efforts are being made to integrate education, technology,

and talent development to cultivate new quality productive forces. The University Town will boost the sustainable development of Macao talent and create a better environment for nurturing youths as the region integrates into national development strategies, he added.

Three key phases

The University Town project is divided into three planned phases, each marking a new step forward in Macao's higher education journey.

The first phase, set to launch by September 2026,

will see the three public universities begin offering postgraduate programmes from a temporary campus in Hengqin – an early glimpse of the planned academic offer.

The second phase, already in motion, focuses on the construction of the UM's new permanent campus, a major milestone scheduled for completion in 2029.

By 2030, the final phase will bring to life a shared campus for the MPU and the UTM, completing an ecosystem designed to foster collaboration, innovation, and international academic exchange.

While no budget has been confirmed yet, previous Government estimates put the project's overall cost at around 20.0 billion patacas. According to information provided by the authorities to the Legislative Assembly last year, the UM campus has a price tag of about 7.0 billion yuan, or 8.4 billion patacas, and the joint MPU-UTM campus will require an investment of just over 9.5 billion patacas.

Hub for international talent

Speaking to legislators earlier this year, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture

✓ Dezhi Plaza, in Hengqin, is being converted into a transitional campus for Macao's three public universities



O Lam emphasised that the University Town project is a direct response to the Central Government's call to build a high-quality higher education system and nurture high-quality talent. She noted that the initiative was guided by the principle of "responding to national needs with Macao's strengths".

The MSAR Government, she noted, will maintain close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Guangdong Provincial Government to establish regulatory frameworks which will ensure that campus operations in Hengqin are aligned with Macao's education standards.

The goal is to complete a majority of the project by 2030, with student enrolment gradually increasing to the 20,000-target, she added. The figure accounts for roughly 30 percent of the existing student population of 67,332 enrolled in postgraduate and undergraduate programmes across Macao's 10 public and private higher education institutions in the 2025/26 academic year, according to data from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ).

"Over the next five years, our goal is to develop a high-quality, distinctive Macao-Hengqin

International Education (University) Town and transform Macao into a key hub for high-end international talent," Ms O stated. Once more operational experience is gained, there might be opportunities for Macao's private higher education institutions to expand into Hengqin as well, she added.

To get the initiative off the ground, Dezhi Plaza, a commercial development in Hengqin, will be transformed into a transitional campus for UM, MPU and UTM as part of the first phase, spanning 65,000 square metres. The facility will include a high-rise teaching and office building, student apartments, a hotel, and 10 low-rise teaching blocks.

Initially, the three universities will offer a combined 42 postgraduate programmes to an inaugural cohort of 1,200 students. UM will lead with 23 courses, while MPU and UTM will contribute seven and 12 programmes respectively, with a focus on fields such as artificial intelligence, data science, fintech, microelectronics, and international tourism management.

New UM faculties

The project's second phase involves the construction of UM's second campus

on Hengqin across a sprawling 375,600-square-metre site, with a gross floor area of 831,000 square metres – the latter similar to the size of its existing main campus. Facilities will include a central teaching building, a sports complex, an international exchange centre, modern residential quarters for students and staff, and other supporting facilities.

This will be UM's second campus on Hengqin. In 2009, with the support of the Central Government and the MSAR Government, UM received approval to build a campus on Hengqin, with the MSAR authorised to exercise jurisdiction over the campus, and applying MSAR law (see pages 16–19). In 2014, UM fully relocated to the original Hengqin campus, which is separated from Taipa by a waterway.

The new campus, scheduled to begin trial operations in 2028 and reach full completion by 2029, will accommodate about 10,000 students and house four faculties: Medicine, Information Science and Computing, Engineering, and Design. This capacity represents nearly 59 percent of UM's current student body. In the 2025/26 academic year, the institution had 17,105 students enrolled across its postgraduate and

A glimpse at Macao's higher education institutions (2025/26)

- Total Number of Higher Education Institutions: 10 (4 public and 6 private)
- Total Number of Students: 67,332
- Local vs. Non-Local Students: 15,563 (23.1%), 51,769 (76.9%)
- Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate Students: 38,633 (57.4%), 28,699 (42.6%)

University of Macao (UM)

- Total Students: 17,105
- Local vs. Non-Local: 5,740 (33.6%), 11,365 (66.4%)
- Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate: 8,269 (48.3%), 8,836 (51.7%)

Macao Polytechnic University (MPU)

- Total Students: 7,827
- Local vs. Non-Local: 3,914 (50%), 3,913 (50%)
- Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate: 5,389 (68.9%), 2,438 (31.1%)

Macao University of Tourism (UTM)

- Total Students: 2,809
- Local vs. Non-Local: 1,181 (42%), 1,628 (58%)
- Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate: 2,255 (80.3%), 554 (19.7%)

undergraduate programmes, including 5,740 local and 11,365 non-local students, according to DSEDJ data.

“UM has taken the lead in offering education and establishing a campus ... in the Cooperation Zone,” UM rector Yonghua Song said last December during a groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus. “UM will build an innovative, multidisciplinary research platform on the new campus to support future development.”

He pledged that UM would integrate its two campuses and incorporate the development of the Hengqin facility into its next five-year strategic plan. Making use of the new campus, the institution would also aim to deepen industry-academia collaboration across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and contribute to the national objective of “achieving high-level scientific and technological self-reliance,” he said.

“The university seeks to become a hub for top international talent through global education, international student recruitment, diverse faculty teams, and international academic activities,” the rector stated. “UM is committed to supporting the integration of Macao and Hengqin and contributing

to the diversification of Macao's economy.”

Global reach

The University Town's third phase will see the establishment of a shared campus for MPU and UTM. The MSAR Government has said it plans to coordinate with the two universities to acquire a land plot in 2026, with construction to start in 2027 and full completion expected by 2030.

While detailed plans are still taking shape, UTM anticipates that the new campus will allow it to expand its student intake to 4,000 once ready, up from the current 2,800. The new infrastructure in Hengqin will be developed with its Macao base in mind, focusing on hotel management, tourism, technology, and science-related disciplines.

As part of the MSAR Government's goal to encourage local universities to collaborate with international institutions in launching new programmes aimed at attracting and retaining global talent, UTM and the Swiss Education Group (SEG) signed a memorandum of cooperation last December, with emphasis on Hengqin. The agreement led to the establishment of the Macao University of Tourism – César Ritz Colleges Switzerland



Construction has officially started on the UM's new campus in Hengqin

Centre for Innovative Talent Development.

This new partnership will strengthen UTM's collaboration with SEG-affiliated institutions – such as the Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland, HIM Business School, Swiss Hotel Management School, and César Ritz Colleges Switzerland – with plans to extend selected programmes into Hengqin, UTM said in a statement.

"UTM is actively aligning with the MSAR government's development plan for the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town and is steadily advancing the expansion of its educational operations within the Cooperation Zone," UTM Rector Fanny Vong Chuk

Kwan said in the statement. "This collaboration is a key step in that process."

"UTM aims to fully leverage the policy advantages and development opportunities offered by the Cooperation Zone, explore innovative educational mechanisms, and work towards creating an internationally influential model of academic collaboration, ultimately contributing to Macao's deeper integration into the national development strategy," she added.

MPU is also positioning itself as a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. In December, it signed a strategic agreement with the University of Coimbra in Portugal to establish a higher

education cooperation base in Hengqin, with a focus on the high-tech and healthcare sectors. The initiative also aims to build a collaborative network spanning Portuguese-speaking countries and beyond.

"To enhance the internationalisation of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, Macao Polytechnic University is leveraging Macao's unique role as a 'precise connector' between China and Portuguese-speaking countries," MPU's Rector Marcus Im Sio Kei said in a statement about the new partnership.

MPU aims to deepen its collaboration with leading global universities through joint education programmes, collaborative research, faculty and student exchanges, as well as via the establishment of joint laboratories and dual-degree initiatives. "The MPU campus in the Cooperation Zone is set to become a key hub for China-Portuguese-speaking countries and broader international educational collaboration," Mr Im added. "This will enable Macao to play a distinctive role in advancing the nation's ambitions to become a global leader in education, science and technology, and talent development." ■

A global talent hub

As the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town begins to take shape, expectations are high that the 20-billion patacas project will not only cultivate further talent for Macao's emerging industries under the Government's "1+4" economic diversification strategy, but also serve the broader development needs of the region and the nation. Crucially, observers say, it should provide more diverse career paths and opportunities for the next generation.

Before Macao Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai outlined last year the University Town as one of four key infrastructure projects intended to drive the city's development, the Central Government had already underscored Macao's role in terms of talent development. At the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2024, chaired by President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping, the central authorities pledged support for Hong Kong and Macao to become hubs for high-level international



▲ The new UM Hengqin campus is set for completion in 2029

talent and to play a greater role in the country's opening-up efforts.

"The University Town reflects Macao's strong commitment to align with national development strategies," said Samuel Tong Kai Chung, president of the Macau Institute of Management (MIM). "Given the current geopolitical climate, China urgently needs to develop its domestic talent development and innovation ecosystems."

Over the years, universities in Macao have played a growing role in nurturing talent not only locally but also regionally. According to data from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), of the 67,332 undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in over 400 programmes across Macao's 10 higher education institutions during the 2025/26 academic year, 72.7 percent – or 48,935 students – were from the Chinese mainland. Local students accounted for 23.1 percent (15,563), while students from Hong Kong made up 2.7 percent (1,846). The remaining cohort – fewer than 1,000 students – came from Taiwan and elsewhere.

Aligned with the nation's interests, the University Town project strategically combines Macao's international openness with Hengqin's land

resources and policy advantages. "The city's vision of building a hub for high-level international talent goes far beyond merely attracting a few individuals," Mr Tong noted.

"It's about leveraging Macao's highly open and international environment and Hengqin's favourable conditions to create a global university platform that can attract top-tier scholars and experts," he continued. "This not only supports the national talent strategy but also injects the scarcest intellectual capital into Macao."

Mr Tong also views the project as deepening Macao's integration with Hengqin, which has been designated by the Central Government as a strategic platform to support the advancement of Macao, particularly following the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin in 2021, an area jointly administered by Guangdong and Macao authorities.

According to MIM's president, Hengqin helps address two of Macao's long-standing development bottlenecks: limited space and market scale. In the case of the University Town, Hengqin provides the physical space for Macao's universities to expand, recruit more students, attract renowned scholars, and expand global academic collaborations. "Establishing a University Town is a crucial step in unlocking new opportunities for the expansion and advancement of higher education in Macao," Mr Tong added.

New academic disciplines

According to the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government's plan, the project will be developed in three phases through 2030. By then, the city's three public universities – University of Macau (UM), Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and Macao University of Tourism (UTM) – will have established new campuses in Hengqin. Once complete, student enrolment is expected to exceed 20,000, which represents circa 30 percent of the city-wide student body in the 2025/26 academic year.

While specific programmes to be offered at the new campuses in Hengqin are still being outlined, legislator Kou Ngon Seng says such courses should



The University Town reflects Macao's strong commitment to align with national development strategies

Samuel Tong Kai Chung
President of the Macau Institute of Management

align closely with the needs of Macao's emerging sectors, as defined in the city's "1+4" diversification strategy. The "1+4" economic development strategy refers to Macao's aim to strengthen its role as a tourism and leisure destination, while developing four new industries: "Big Health", with a focus on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM); modern financial services; high and new technologies; as well as MICE, with the hosting of large-scale international events, including business conventions, sporting events and concerts.

"The University Town should nurture talent that can contribute directly to these sectors and respond to demand arising from the city's economic diversification," stated Mr Kou, who also serves as president of the Macau Development Strategy Research Centre.

The academic focus of each higher-education institution's campus in Hengqin should be distinct, he suggested. For instance, the UM Hengqin campus – set for completion by 2029 – will include the faculties of Medicine, Information Science and Computing, Engineering, and Design. The joint



The University Town carries the important mission of cultivating local talent in Macao and building an international talent hub

Kou Ngong Seng

Legislator and president of the Macau Development Strategy Research Centre

campus for MPU and UTM, due to be completed in 2030, could focus on areas such as artificial intelligence, smart tourism, sports technology, and Portuguese-language studies, Mr Kou added.

"The University Town carries the important mission of cultivating local talent in Macao and building an international talent hub," the legislator remarked. "By introducing innovative academic disciplines and establishing a strong research environment, it could enhance the research capabilities and global competitiveness of Macao's talent pool."

Synergetic effect

Mr Kou also sees the University Town as complementary to the other three key infrastructure projects proposed by the Macao Government, particularly the Macao science and technology research industrial park, which will span two sites and focus on the fields of biomedicine, integrated circuits, digital technology, and aerospace.

"With its focus on cutting-edge research and applied technology, the University Town can generate a strong synergy with the Macao science and technology research industrial park," he said. "By creating a mechanism that would connect the University Town, the industrial park, and tech enterprises, Macao can better convert academic research into industrial applications, accelerating the growth of its technology sector and economy."

Mr Tong shares the same perspective, noting that global technology and innovation hubs are often anchored by leading universities that integrate academia with industry. In addition, the other two proposed key infrastructure projects – the Macao Pearl River West Bank International Air Transport Hub and the Macao international integrated tourism and cultural zone – could also play, to a certain extent, a supporting role in attracting talents to Macao.

The air transport hub, which covers the expansion of the Macau International Airport and a new pre-clearance cargo terminal in Hengqin, will help boost the city's aviation connectivity, while the tourism cultural zone – entailing the construction of a national museum of culture,

an international performing arts centre, and a contemporary art museum – can enhance the living environment for talent, Mr Tong explained. “Together with the University Town, these can help Macao become a hub for high-end talent,” he stressed.

A rise in rankings

Aside from aligning with national development strategies, the University Town is envisioned as a springboard for Macao’s next generation: fostering more academic and career pathways for young locals while equipping them with the tools to thrive in a fast-changing global landscape.

“Creating a high-quality learning environment is a prerequisite for nurturing top-tier talent,” said Sio Hin Wa, president of the General Association of Chinese Students of Macao. “By offering local youth access to a broader range of disciplines and cutting-edge fields of study right here at home, the University Town project lays a strong foundation not only for individual growth but also for Macao’s long-term development.”

Career planning and academic progression remain top concerns for many young people in Macao, Mr Sio observed. The University Town might help address these challenges by broadening local higher-education options and aligning them more closely with real-world needs. He noted that the initiative will also offer students early exposure to the workforce through internships, university-industry collaboration, and hands-on learning opportunities, creating a supportive environment for a smoother, more confident transition from classroom to career.

The project also comes at a time when Macao’s universities are making measurable gains in terms of global recognition. While historically trailing behind regional counterparts, local institutions are now boosting their rankings. “As Macao’s universities rise in international rankings and the University Town becomes a reality, the city will become increasingly attractive to both local and overseas students,” Mr Sio said.

In the 2026 edition of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, which polled 2,191 institutions from 115 countries and



This project is a strategic platform to expand opportunities for Macao’s youth

Sio Hin Wa
President of the General Association
of Chinese Students of Macao

regions, UM climbed to 145th place, from the 180th spot in 2025, and from the 301–350 range in 2020. MUST was ranked between 251–300 this year, while the City University of Macau made its debut in the 601–800 bracket.

The Macao Government also hopes that the University Town will foster deeper collaboration between local and internationally renowned institutions, developing new programmes to attract and retain global talent. Mr Sio believes this internationalisation will equip students with a broader global outlook. “With Hengqin’s spatial and policy advantages, students could also be able to engage more directly in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the country as a whole. It broadens their horizons,” he stated.

As the first phase of the project is now in progress, Mr Sio called on the authorities to enhance support for local youth in areas such as career guidance and student services.

“This project is not only a key driver for Macao’s economic diversification and integration with Hengqin, but also a strategic platform to expand opportunities for Macao’s youth, helping them define their paths earlier and build stronger competitiveness for the future,” he concluded. ■

Why Macao universities head to Hengqin

Text **Viviana Chan**

In less than two decades, higher education cooperation between Macao and Hengqin has shifted from a pragmatic response to land scarcity to a far-reaching experiment in cross-boundary academic integration. What began as an effort to expand physical campus space has evolved into a broader model encompassing research collaboration, industry partnerships and new forms of education governance under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework.

The initial turning point came in June 2009, when the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress authorised the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government to lease land-use rights on Hengqin Island for a new University of Macau (UM) campus. Under the arrangement, the land would be administered under Macao law. The MSAR Government paid 1.2 billion patacas for a 40-year lease, running until 2049, and funded the construction of the 10.2 billion-patacas campus.

At the time, there was no recent precedent for a parcel of land on the Chinese mainland being placed under a different legal jurisdiction in this way. For UM, the decision meant a complete relocation from its Taipa campus to Hengqin, involving the transfer of more than 10,000 students and staff, some 650,000 books and around 60 laboratories.

To facilitate access from Macao, an underwater tunnel was built, allowing passage without the usual immigration checks between Macao and the Chinese mainland. Concrete barriers physically separated the campus from the rest of Hengqin, a configuration that led to the campus having its

own fire and police stations, as well as a dedicated internet connection linked to Macao. The new campus officially opened in November 2013, covering approximately 1.1 square kilometres, around 20 times the size of UM’s former site in Taipa.

Addressing constraints

According to Professor Zhu Jian-Kang, who was appointed president of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) in January, cooperation between Macao and Hengqin has progressed “from policy conception to practical implementation through several key stages”, driven by what he describes as the structural complementarity between Macao’s development needs and Hengqin’s geographical advantages.

Reflecting on the impact of UM’s relocation, Prof. Zhu identifies three principal outcomes. First, teaching space and research facilities were significantly enhanced, strengthening the university’s capacity to attract international talent. Second, the expanded campus created scope for the development of emerging and interdisciplinary fields. Third, the project established a new model of cross-boundary higher education cooperation under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, which, he told Macao Magazine, provided both institutional safeguards and a reference pathway for other Macao universities seeking to extend their operations to Hengqin.

In its initial phase, however, Macao-Hengqin cooperation in higher education “was largely limited to resolving UM’s space constraints”,



▲ The University of Macau main campus on Hengqin Island officially opened in November 2013

Prof. Zhu noted. Over time, the gradual relocation of additional educational resources from Macao to areas of Hengqin under Chinese mainland jurisdiction allowed for more systematic integration, laying the foundations for a new stage of collaboration.

That trajectory was highlighted in the Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, released by the national authorities in 2021. The document called for the establishment in Hengqin of “high-standard industry-academia-research demonstration bases” by Macao higher education institutions, positioning the Cooperation Zone as an “important pivot” for international scientific and technological innovation within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Two years before, in 2019, UM had already launched its first industry-academia collaboration body in Hengqin through the Zhuhai UM Science and Technology Research Institute (ZUMRI), located outside the campus perimeter. Through ZUMRI, the university established three branches of its state key laboratories on Hengqin, specialising in Chinese medicine, microelectronics, and the internet of things for smart cities. In 2023, the

Hengqin University of Macau Advanced Research Institute was established.

Other higher education institutions followed a similar path. The Macao University of Tourism (UTM) established the UTM Hengqin Training Base in 2019 in partnership with local authorities, focusing on professional training and tourism service standards, and added a vocational practice centre the following year. MUST, meanwhile, set up branches of its state key research laboratories in Chinese medicine and lunar and planetary science at Hengqin’s MUST Innovation Technology Research Institute, launched in 2020.

Commenting on MUST’s submission of an application at the end of 2024 to extend its operations to Hengqin, Prof. Zhu cautioned that the move alone does not signal the arrival of a new phase of integration. He described it instead as “an important component of a broader trend”. The critical milestone, he argued, would be formal approval by the MSAR Government for Macao higher education institutions to expand their educational activities within the Cooperation Zone, as envisioned under the proposed Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town. Such approval would mark a shift in emphasis from



Macao-Hengqin cooperation in higher education has progressed from policy conception to practical implementation through several key stages

Zhu Jian-Kang
President of the Macau University of Science and Technology

“research collaboration” to a more comprehensive model integrating “talent development, research innovation and industry alignment”.

Looking back over nearly two decades, he argues that the most significant achievement lies not only in expanded physical capacity, but in “forging an innovative pathway for cross-boundary higher education integration”. These developments, he said, have injected new momentum into Macao’s higher education sector while testing, at a national strategic level, the feasibility and resilience of cross-boundary regional coordination under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle.

Differentiated development

For Professor Lam Fat Iam, a member of Macao’s Legislative Assembly and dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Macao



➡ Several Macao-based higher education institutions have established research facilities on Hengqin

Polytechnic University, the roots of Macao-Hengqin higher education cooperation lie in the city's physical limitations, coupled with Hengqin's availability of land and supportive policy environment.

The opening of UM's Hengqin campus in 2013, he told Macao Magazine, carried multiple symbolic meanings. It marked the first time a Macao university "expanded a physical campus within a Guangdong-Macao cooperation platform, while also increasing the university's education scale and research capacity". At the same time, it "strengthened the influence of Macao's education sector across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, at the national level and internationally, helping to build trust and cooperation between Guangdong and Macao".

Following the campus's inauguration, Prof. Lam observed a clear shift in the cooperation model. "What had initially centred on the establishment of a single large campus by one institution evolved into a more diversified, multi-institutional and flexible approach," he said.

"Cooperation increasingly focused on research collaboration, industry incubation and professional training, characterised by Macao universities directly setting up institutes and parks within the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, thereby facilitating research commercialisation and two-way talent mobility."

Viewed from a broader Greater Bay Area perspective, Macao-Hengqin higher education cooperation plays several roles, Prof. Lam argues. It acts as a bridge linking Macao with the Chinese mainland, supports complementarities between specialised academic disciplines and regional industrial needs, and enhances international education exchanges. Macao's links with Portuguese-speaking countries, he adds, could be further amplified through the Hengqin platform.

Compared with similar initiatives elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area, Prof. Lam emphasises the distinctiveness of the Macao-Hengqin model. "It operates under the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework, with UM's Hengqin campus governed by Macao law – a rarity among mainland university



The opening of UM's Hengqin campus in 2013 strengthened the influence of Macao's education sector across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, at the national level and internationally

Lam Fat lam

Scholar and member of Macao's Legislative Assembly

towns – and enjoys a higher degree of institutional flexibility."

This singularity, Prof. Lam acknowledges, is not without challenges. These include "operational complexity arising from legal and institutional differences" between Macao and Hengqin, "barriers to talent movement", "mismatches between academic disciplines and market demand", and the potential impact of future changes in Chinese mainland student recruitment patterns.

The planned Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, he said, is expected to benefit from greater policy latitude in joint education provision than any other similar initiative on the Chinese mainland. "These factors underpin its unique position, enabling it to stand out within the Greater Bay Area's education landscape and potentially form a tripartite structure alongside the eastern Guangdong-Hong Kong-Shenzhen university cluster and the Guangzhou-centred higher education hub." ■

Insights from Guangzhou University Town

Text **Viviana Chan**

As higher-education cooperation accelerates across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, university towns and education clusters have taken shape in several cities. Among the earliest and most developed is Guangzhou University Town, often cited by academics as a benchmark. However, in interviews with Macao Magazine, scholars caution that its relevance for the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town project lies less in physical scale and more on planning and governance.

First proposed in 2000, Guangzhou University Town – also known as the Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center – was planned as a vast, purpose-built hub covering roughly 17.9 square kilometres. It occupies the entirety of Xiaoguwei Island in Panyu district. Construction began in 2003, and the complex started operating the following year, welcoming 10 universities including Sun Yat-sen University and enrolling more than 38,000 new students.

Expansion soon followed. A second phase extended the education hub beyond Xiaoguwei Island to a separate 25.3-square-kilometre site across the river in Xinzao Town, also in Panyu district. The first two campuses there, belonging to Jinan University and Guangzhou Medical University, opened in 2014.

By last year, Guangzhou was home to approximately 1.68 million university students – the highest total of any Chinese city. Some 200,000 students and scholars were studying or working at the 12 institutions located within Guangzhou

University Town alone. Beyond teaching and research, the complex incorporates science and technology incubators and innovation-oriented industrial parks, with sustainability positioned as a guiding principle.

Valuable insights

For Lou Shenghua, a professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Macao Polytechnic University, Guangzhou's experience offers valuable lessons for the proposed Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town – provided those lessons are applied selectively.

“The significance of Guangzhou University Town lies in its approach to spatial planning, disciplinary coordination, industry-academia-research collaboration, governance mechanisms, and the integration of universities with the city,” Prof. Lou told Macao Magazine. “These are areas where Macao-Hengqin cooperation can draw inspiration, rather than simply copying an existing model.”

Unified planning and functional zoning, he argues, have helped Guangzhou concentrate teaching and research resources, reduce duplication and encourage collaboration across institutions. A similar logic could guide the Macao-Hengqin education hub, he suggests, by coordinating academic, research, residential and industrial spaces, while reserving shared facilities – such as libraries, laboratories and sports complexes – from the outset.



Guangzhou University Town currently comprises campuses of 12 higher education institutions

Equally important, Prof. Lou stresses, is the synchronised development of supporting infrastructure. “Transport, accommodation and commercial facilities must be planned alongside campus development,” he said, warning that an overemphasis on construction of academic buildings without adequate supporting services could weaken the effectiveness of an education hub.

On academic strategy and industry collaboration, he highlights the importance of differentiated institutional positioning. Rather than pursuing comprehensive disciplinary coverage, universities within the Macao-Hengqin hub should build on their respective strengths to avoid unnecessary competition.

In terms of research commercialisation, he notes that Guangzhou has advanced a “university research and development plus park-based transformation” model. By contrast, the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town could promote a “Macao-based research and Hengqin-based commercialisation” approach,

supported by incubators and innovation platforms to lower barriers to turning research outcomes into practical applications.

Joint management

Prof. Lou cautions, however, that Guangzhou’s model cannot be transplanted wholesale. While its experience in resource sharing, industry-academia-research coordination, and university-city integration offers broad reference value, the cross-boundary nature of Macao and Hengqin creates a fundamentally different institutional and academic context. Models developed within a single Chinese mainland administrative system, he noted, “may not be directly applicable”.

Guangzhou University Town was planned, built and operated under a unified local-government framework. By contrast, the Macao-Hengqin education hub involves the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government, the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, and multiple universities, operating under different legal and administrative regimes.



The significance of Guangzhou University Town lies in its approach to spatial planning, disciplinary coordination, industry-academia-research collaboration, governance mechanisms, and the integration of universities with the city

Lou Shenghua

Scholar at Macao Polytechnic University



Hangzhou's recent growth in artificial intelligence, for instance, is the result of a complete industrial ecosystem, capital support and enabling policies, rather than the physical clustering of universities

Agnes Lam Iok Fong

Director of the Centre for Macau Studies at the University of Macau

Simply replicating a single-government-led approach could, he warns, create obstacles in areas such as student administration, research funding flows and intellectual property rights.

The priority, therefore, should not be in copying Guangzhou's specific practices, but in building a governance structure suited to a cross-boundary setting. Prof. Lou suggests establishing an integrated governance mechanism, such as a joint management committee bringing together representatives from the MSAR Government, the Cooperation Zone, and participating universities, to coordinate planning, resource allocation and policy implementation.

That emphasis on institutions rather than infrastructure is echoed by Agnes Lam Iok Fong, associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Macau's Faculty of Social Sciences and director of its Centre for Macau Studies. A university town, she cautions, does not automatically generate innovation or industrial growth; what matters is whether the overall environment enables knowledge circulation and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

"Hangzhou's recent growth in artificial intelligence, including examples such as DeepSeek, is the result of a complete industrial ecosystem, capital support and enabling policies, rather than the physical clustering of universities," she told Macao Magazine. She points to Beijing's Zhongguancun – often dubbed "China's Silicon Valley" – as another case in which long-term institutional evolution, rather than short-term planning, drove success. "Innovation in Zhongguancun emerged from sustained interaction among research bodies, businesses and capital, not from the prior construction of a park," she said.

For Ms Lam, the ultimate measure of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town should not be the scale of its campuses or buildings. Instead, its value will lie in whether it can foster genuine cross-university course sharing, jointly operated research platforms and sustained engagement with Hengqin's industries – the less visible, but more decisive, foundations of an effective education and innovation hub. ■



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TRADITION

CELEBRATING THE CHINESE NEW YEAR, MACAO-STYLE

Text Emanuel Graça

Macao is preparing to welcome the **Year of the Horse** with a heady mix of colour, sound, and community celebration. From February 17, the city's streets and skies come alive with glittering parades, dazzling fireworks, and a programme of performances inviting locals and visitors alike to join in the seasonal cheer



As the city readies for the Year of the Horse, Macao hums with ritual and anticipation. Streets bustle, homes are meticulously cleaned, and red decorations appear everywhere, signalling a carefully-choreographed effort to tidy away any hint of misfortune and ensure future prosperity.

Chinese New Year – also known as the Spring Festival – has deep roots in Macao’s history and culture, marking a farewell to that which is old and a welcome to that which is new. Celebrations traditionally extend until the Lantern Festival, on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month.

According to feng shui tradition, the upcoming year is known as “Bing Wu”, or the Fire Horse, when energy is said to radiate with the intensity of the midday sun: vibrant, fiery, and impossible to ignore.

In Chinese astrology, each lunar year begins on the second new moon following the winter solstice. This year, the cycle starts on February 17. Macao marks the occasion with three consecutive days of public holiday, from February 17 to 19, corresponding to the first three days of the Chinese New Year.

Locally, the celebrations reflect the customs of the Lingnan region. Families make offerings to the Kitchen God, hold reunion dinners, and display spring couplets, or “fai chun”, with auspicious greetings. Relatives and friends come together to enjoy New Year delicacies, reinforcing the communal spirit that defines the festival. Locals exchange lucky money in red envelopes (“lai si”) and observe the tradition of remaining at home on the third day of the Chinese New Year, to avoid conflict.

These customs are more than decorative



– they are regarded as ways to start the year with harmony, luck, and positive energy. Households take care not to discard rubbish or pour away water in the initial days of the New Year, actions believed to expel symbols of fortune. Even the bath carries symbolism: some families use an infusion of pomelo leaves to wash away misfortunes from the past year.

Food plays an equally important role in the celebrations. Fish represents abundance; sticky-rice cakes signify progress; long noodles promise longevity; and tangerines bring luck and prosperity. Each dish is carefully chosen to strengthen family unity and invite health, wealth, and happiness for the year ahead. ■

CHINESE NEW YEAR MUST-DOS IN MACAO

Seeking fresh blessings

Visiting a temple during Chinese New Year carries deep spiritual meaning for many Macao people. Marking a moment of renewal, the festival is widely seen as a time that influences fortunes for the year ahead. Temple visits offer an opportunity to seek blessings for good health, family harmony, academic achievement, career advancement and prosperity.

Among the most-frequented sites during the festive period is A-Ma Temple, where crowds traditionally gather in the early

hours of Chinese New Year. Worshippers arrive bearing incense and offerings, hoping to secure good fortune as the fresh year begins.

The holiday period sees temporary stalls set up in the square that fronts A-Ma Temple, for the selling of incense and joss sticks. The stalls offer worshippers convenient access to ritual essentials while contributing to the festival ambience. This year, the stalls are open to the public from the afternoon of February 16 until February 23.



Lighting the path to fortune

The boom of firecrackers and the fizz of fireworks remain among the most recognisable markers of Chinese New Year in Macao. Their use is rooted in belief that noise and light wards off misfortune, including evil spirits and bad luck, so clearing the way for a peaceful and prosperous year ahead.

To balance tradition with public safety, local authorities designate special areas each year where locals and visitors can buy and set off fireworks and firecrackers

under safe conditions. The activity is particularly popular among family groups and young people, offering a shared moment of celebration during the holiday period.

This year, one designated area is in operation, located in Taipa near the waterfront along Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro. Six licensed stalls are selling fireworks and firecrackers on site, with the special zone open from February 16 to 21.

Preparing for prosperity

Chinese New Year markets offer an array of festive decorations, flowers, incense and symbolic gifts, with each item in turn associated with ideas of renewal and auspicious beginnings. For many residents, a visit to such a market ahead of Chinese New Year is an essential ritual, allowing homes and offerings to be prepared in line with long-held beliefs about welcoming good fortune in the year ahead.

One of Macao's main New Year markets is held at Tap Seac

Square. This year's edition runs from February 10 until the night of February 16 to 17. The final hours of the market are traditionally one of the busiest periods as crowds gather for last-minute festive shopping.

This year's Tap Seac market features 16 stalls selling New Year products, six offering festive flowers, and four stalls dedicated to snacks. A programme of cultural and entertainment performances is also being staged in the square.



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Wheel of good fortune

Pinwheels are among the most recognisable symbols of Chinese New Year, celebrated for their associations with luck, renewal, and positive energy. In Chinese tradition, spinning a pinwheel is thought to "turn" misfortune away, while attracting good fortune, prosperity and success.

Throughout the festive season, pinwheels are displayed in homes, markets and temples. Their bright colours – often red and gold – bring

vibrancy to streets and public spaces. For children, they are also playful objects, linking cultural tradition with family participation and festive fun.

During the holiday, pinwheels can be found at a number of places, including temporary stalls selling incense and joss sticks in the square in front of A-Ma Temple. This year, those particular stalls are open to the public from the afternoon of February 16 until February 23.

Tradition in motion

Organised annually by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the Gigantic Golden Dragon Parade traditionally takes place on the first day of the Chinese New Year, drawing locals and visitors alike.

The parade is among the highlights of Macao's Chinese New Year celebrations, with the dragon ("loong") symbolising strength, prosperity, and good fortune. Winding its way from the Ruins of St Paul's to A-Ma

Temple, the parade honours cultural traditions and ushers in Chinese New Year with colour, spectacle, and auspicious energy.

As well as the dragon parade, MGTO stages a series of complementary celebratory events. This year, a community roadshow is on February 17 and 18, while drone and fireworks displays are lighting up the waterfront at Macau Tower on the evenings of February 19 and 23, and March 3.



Horse on parade

In recent years, float parades have made their way into Chinese New Year celebrations in Macao. These are organised by the Macao Government Tourism Office and blend colourful performance with displays of great flair.

This year, the first parade is at 8pm on February 19, the third day of the Chinese New Year. Beginning at Sai Van Lake Square, the procession winds along Avenida Dr Sun Yat-Sen, past the Macao Science Center, concluding at Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

The event features cultural performances with groups drawn from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, and overseas, adding energy to the 17-float procession.

A second parade is at 8pm on February 28, the twelfth day of the Chinese New Year. Starting at Rua Norte do Patane, it moves along the northern part of Macao Peninsula before concluding at Iao Hon Market Park, where cultural performances are to entertain the crowd. This parade also features 17 floats.

TRADE

MACAO BRIDGES CHINA-ASEAN FUTURE

Text **Tony Lai**

As China and the ASEAN strengthen economic ties, Macao is ramping itself up as a key trade and cultural bridge between the two sides. Backed by fresh initiatives, Macao can reimagine its future as a small city with big regional influence, says Kelvin Tan Hai Ching, chairman of the **Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce**

As the Chinese mainland and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continue to be each other's biggest trading partners, a new and unexpected link is developing between these two economic powerhouses: Macao. Known for its cultural mix and free port status, Macao is moving into a more strategic

role, as it aims to connect the Chinese mainland and Southeast Asia through trade, innovation, and shared heritage.

With its strong ties to overseas Chinese communities in the region, Macao is reshaping itself as a dynamic gateway for cooperation and exchange. Kelvin Tan Hai Ching, chairman of the Macao ASEAN International Chamber



📍 Kelvin Tan Hai Ching, chairman of the MAICC since 2024

of Commerce (MAICC), is leading this vision, highlighting the ASEAN's vast potential as a trade partner, namely its growing population and fast-expanding economy.

"ASEAN currently has a combined population of over 600 million, and some studies suggest the bloc's GDP [gross domestic product] could surpass that of the European Union by 2032," Mr Tan said in an interview with Macao Magazine. "The potential of ASEAN is truly unmatched."

Originally a 10-member bloc – comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – the group welcomed Timor-Leste as its 11th member in October 2025, underscoring

its growing regional reach.

With its young population and fast-growing economies, ASEAN is projected to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030, according to a December article by The World Economic Forum, an international advocacy non-governmental organisation.

The "ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030", adopted in June 2025 at the 46th ASEAN Summit, outlines key measures for building a prosperous, integrated, and innovation-driven economy.

Beyond ASEAN's growth potential, trade relations between China and the 11-member bloc remain strong. In 2024, the Chinese mainland marked its 16th straight year as ASEAN's

top trading partner, while ASEAN has held the same position with China for five consecutive years.

Against this backdrop of economic ties, alongside the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Macao's status as a free and open port, Mr Tan believes the city could deepen its role as a bridge between ASEAN and the Chinese mainland, mainly for the Greater Bay Area. "Macao's most effective role between the two sides lies in trade, particularly as a transit point," he said. "It can serve as a gateway for products from the Greater Bay Area to move through Macao into ASEAN markets, and vice versa."

To unlock such potential, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is critical, Mr Tan suggested. The RCEP, which came into effect in 2022, is the world's largest free trade agreement, uniting ASEAN members – except for Timor-Leste – with Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand.

Now that Hong Kong has applied to join the RCEP, Mr Tan suggested Macao should also consider joining the pact to strengthen its trade and economic ties across the region. "We should take a more proactive approach in leveraging international agreements to maximise Macao's unique position," Mr Tan stated.

Halal certification centre

One initiative that could greatly improve Macao's role as a regional trade facilitator would be the establishment of a halal certification centre in the city. The potential, according to MAICC's president, is immense, as about 300 million people across ASEAN are Muslim, and they

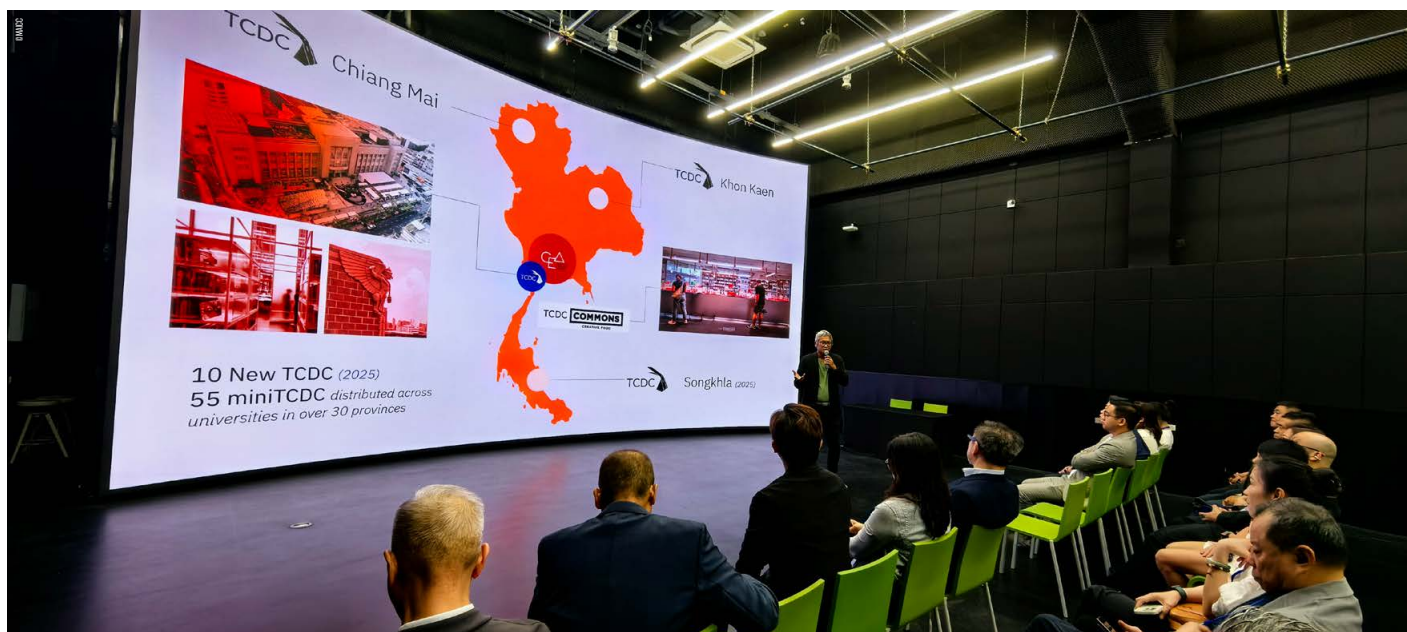
typically consume only products certified as halal. Halal certification would then be a mark of trust for consumers, ensuring that food and other products adhere to Islamic law, meaning they must avoid pork, alcohol, and other prohibited substances, use only permissible ingredients, and follow specific preparation, processing, and slaughter methods.

However, Mr Tan pointed out, many exports from Guangdong province, a major manufacturing hub, still lack this certification, creating barriers to entry in one of the world's fastest-growing regions. "Halal certification is a complex process that requires full traceability because every raw material and its country of origin must be verified," Mr Tan explained.

Recognising this opportunity, efforts are already underway to establish a halal certification centre in Macao. The initiative, spearheaded by a board member of the MAICC, has gained momentum through outreach to the Malaysian government,



MAICC participates in various trade events to promote ties between Macao and ASEAN members



Members of the chamber visited Thailand in mid-2025

specifically the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), one of the most recognised halal certification bodies globally.

“The Malaysian government has dispatched representatives to Macao to inspect and follow up on the matter... We hope the centre can be established within this year to support the exports from the Greater Bay Area to ASEAN markets,” he detailed. The proposed centre will focus on food products and cosmetics, two of the common categories exported from Guangdong to ASEAN countries.

Setting up such a centre is also no simple task. Personnel involved must undergo specialised training, and some roles must be filled exclusively by Muslim professionals. In addition, the centre must be located away from pig farms or pork-processing facilities, a requirement Macao satisfies due to the absence of agricultural and heavy industries.

“The process is undoubtedly complex,” Mr Tan acknowledged. “But Macao offers ideal conditions for

halal certification. If we can establish such a centre, it will greatly benefit exports from the Greater Bay Area to Muslim markets, not only in ASEAN but also across the Middle East.”

Focus on Greater Bay Area

Beyond the efforts to facilitate halal certification, the MAICC, founded in 2009, has been actively undertaking an array of initiatives to accelerate bilateral ties between Macao and ASEAN members. Among key activities is the organisation of visits for the chamber’s 200-plus members, including business representatives and entrepreneurs, to ASEAN countries.

Recent visits to Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand have given local businesses valuable insights into the latest market developments and opportunities in Southeast Asia. The chamber is now considering new destinations, with Vietnam, one of ASEAN’s fastest-growing economies, and Timor-Leste, the bloc’s newest member, as potential destinations for 2026.

The MAICC also extends support to ASEAN government and business delegations visiting Macao to attend major trade fairs, such as the Macao International Trade & Investment Fair (MIF). “The purpose of establishing the chamber was to promote commercial, economic, and tourism exchanges between ASEAN countries and Macao,” Mr Tan said.

In its early years, the MAICC adopted a broad approach, engaging with businesses across the Chinese mainland. “But in recent years, we’ve sharpened our strategy to specifically target the Greater Bay Area, given Macao’s role within this region,” he added. “We are now actively supporting both local and even Greater Bay Area enterprises in expanding into ASEAN markets, while also encouraging ASEAN businesses to invest in Macao, which in turn serves as a gateway into the Greater Bay Area.”

Tourism exchanges

While trade remains central, Mr Tan also sees tourism as a powerful avenue to build stronger ties between Macao and ASEAN. With tourism being one of Macao’s key economic pillars, the city has been actively seeking to diversify its visitor structure and attract more international travellers.

In the 2026 Policy Address, the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government announced plans to establish two new tourism and trade offices – one in Southeast Asia and another in Northeast Asia – to attract more tourists beyond the Greater China market. Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, has been chosen for one of the new offices, in a bid to boost trade and economic exchanges, but also to attract more

visitors from Muslim countries, according to the document.

“Through combined efforts by the government and industry stakeholders, there’s been a clear increase in the number of Southeast Asian visitors in recent years, but some figures have yet to return to the pre-COVID levels seen in 2019,” Mr Tan pointed out. To appeal to a broader market, he said, Macao must continue improving its facilities and services, particularly in areas like halal-certified dining options and multilingual service staff, especially those proficient in English.

According to data from Macao’s Statistics and Census Service, visitors from the Chinese mainland, the Hong Kong SAR and the Taiwan region accounted for circa 93.1 percent of total arrivals in 2025, with ASEAN countries topping the international segment: Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore ranking among the city’s top 10 sources of overseas visitors. Macao witnessed robust growth from Thailand in 2025, with a 38.1 percent year-on-year surge in visitors (185,963 arrivals), resulting in a 22.7-percent increase over 2019. Conversely, Singaporean visitor numbers dipped slightly from a year earlier, declining by 1.7 percent to 117,165, but up 1.2 percent compared to the pre-pandemic levels.

Rooted in the past

Macao’s market is smaller than neighbouring Hong Kong, and that is why it hosts fewer businesses

We’ve sharpened our strategy to specifically target the Greater Bay Area, given Macao’s role within this region

Kelvin Tan Hai Ching
Chairman of the Macao ASEAN
International Chamber of Commerce



from the ASEAN bloc, Mr Tan observed. However, Macao is home to several prominent corporations and brands across a wide range of sectors, including Singaporean multinational banking group OCBC, real estate and hospitality brand The Ascott, and luxury hotel chain Capella Hotels & Resorts.

Beyond the business landscape, Macao's connection to ASEAN extends into cultural and historical aspects. The city shares deep ties with Southeast Asia, shaped by waves of Chinese migration throughout the 20th century. During the political and social movements throughout Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of overseas Chinese eventually settled in Macao and formed what has been described as a "vibrant" part of the local community, according to a study of returned overseas Chinese in Macao.

One enduring symbol of these deep-rooted connections is the Association of Returned Overseas Chinese Macau, which has been linking generations of families since its founding in 1968. The organisation claims to represent and connect more than 100,000 returned overseas Chinese and their families from 65 countries and regions, many of them from Southeast Asia and Portuguese-speaking countries.

"Macao has a significant number of returned overseas Chinese and their families. Many of them have deep-rooted ties to Southeast Asia through family, businesses, and government connections," Mr Tan said, himself a member of the Malaysian Chinese diaspora. "We've been leveraging these relationships to strengthen regional cooperation and engagement between Macao and ASEAN," he explained. ■



INTERVIEW

IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS

Text **Cherry Chan**

As one of the city's largest civic organisations, the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau has played a central role in Macao's social fabric for over 40 years. Chairwoman **Ng Siu Lai** reflects on the association's past and reveals plans for the future

How was the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM or "Kai Fong") established?

UGAMM was established in 1983. Why 1983? This was linked to preparations for Macao's return to the motherland. [Editor's Note: China and the United Kingdom had formally begun negotiations regarding the handover of Hong Kong in 1982, and Macao was expected to follow suit.] At the time, we saw the need to bring together the strength of various neighbourhood associations across different districts that were already providing services to residents. These organisations were created to offer support and convenience to people

living in their respective neighbourhoods, functioning as groups of mutual aid. We wanted to contribute to the process of Macao's return to the motherland. As a result, we pooled our resources and formally established UGAMM [bringing together an initial group of 24 neighbourhood associations].

What are the key services currently provided by UGAMM? Have there been changes before and after the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR)?


The scope of our services has broadly remained the same since our establishment: we have always worked at neighbourhood level. However, after UGAMM was formed, the consolidation of resources from affiliated associations gradually allowed us to provide more professional support.

Before the handover, our resources were limited, and our work focused mainly on social services and mutual aid, albeit under constraints. Afterwards, with increased resources allocated by the MSAR Government, we evolved from a mutual aid-based organisation into one providing more professionalised services.

UGAMM is like a large member of the family community – we live in the same neighbourhoods as the residents we serve. Our services are open to everyone, and we aim to support different groups through our platform.

Our work covers a wide range of activities. Today, our services cater to people from birth to over 100 years old. We offer childcare services, as well as programmes for young people, families, the wider community and the elderly.



UGAMM provides a range of elderly care services 

For example, during Chinese New Year, we organise visits to elderly people living alone, bringing warmth to them during the festive season. These initiatives often attract participation from businesses, young people and students.

We have also launched promotional schemes in several districts. Over the past two years, we have organised charity markets in different areas, supported by major leisure and entertainment operators. These markets help connect large enterprises with local small and medium-sized businesses and contribute to the community economy.

For older residents, our services have become increasingly diverse. These include day care centres, initiatives for elderly people living alone, and the “Peng On Tung” tele-assistance programme, which provides round-the-clock support to elderly residents living on their own.

Support for the elderly appears to be a major focus of UGAMM’s work.

As Macao’s ageing population has become a more pressing issue in recent years, we have increased our investment in elderly services, including the use of artificial intelligence. Recently, we launched a mobile application called “Happy Elderly Home”, designed specifically for elderly people living alone. The app monitors daily step counts and detects abnormal movement patterns that may indicate an incident. If an alert is triggered, our staff will contact the individual to provide assistance.

Technology-led initiatives such as this allow us to deliver better support for elderly residents, and we intend to continue developing services in this direction.

Another key service is the “Peng On Tung” tele-assistance programme. Around 2009, Macao’s Social Welfare Bureau announced plans to establish the service through a public tender. At the time, this type of hotline was new to Macao. Although we already provided extensive elderly support,

The face of Macao’s civic community

At the heart of Macao’s civic community for more than a decade, Ng Siu Lai has been a familiar presence as a senior figure with the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM). With her fingers squarely on the pulse of the Macao community, she rose to become the chairwoman of UGAMM in 2021.

Her influence extends beyond the local sphere too. She currently serves as a Macao deputy to the National People’s Congress, having previously been a delegate to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

Her national-level roles mirror UGAMM’s prominence within Macao’s political landscape. The organisation maintains close links with the city’s legislature, with three current members of the Legislative Assembly – Leong Hong Sai, Ngan Iek Hang and Ho Ion Sang – associated with the group.

UGAMM also plays an active role in government-led initiatives. In addition, the group’s leadership is frequently consulted on policymaking priorities for the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR). Just two months after assuming office on December 20, 2024, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai met with UGAMM representatives to exchange views on his political agenda. At the meeting, Ms Ng underscored the organisation’s intention to “remain committed to its role as a bridge for liaison and communication between the government and the public”, according to a release from the Government Information Bureau.



Ng Siu Lai became chairwoman of UGAMM in 2021

we lacked experience in operating such a system, so we invited consultants from neighbouring regions to assist with training.

We eventually won the tender, and for more than a decade we have delivered the service to a professional standard. It has received positive feedback from the community. Elderly residents, in particular, widely recognise its value: when they encounter difficulties at home or outdoors, they can immediately contact staff to receive emergency assistance.

In recent years, diversifying support for young people beyond UGAMM-run nurseries and schools has been a priority. Youth services are a major focus for us. We have professionals providing counselling services in schools, with a team of more than 60 specialists assigned to different institutions to offer individual counselling and group support. This service has been in place for around two decades and is well recognised by schools and the wider community.

We also provide various forms of support to young people through the close community networks of our affiliated neighbourhood associations. When younger generations face challenges, our staff are often able to step in and offer timely assistance.

Families are another key focus. We have long provided services for families, and we also work closely with nurseries, parent

associations and other groups to support those in need. In addition, we run dedicated schemes for single-parent families to help them cope with everyday pressures.

UGAMM also participates in the local political sphere. What are the organisation's main areas of focus in this regard?

Members of the Legislative Assembly associated with UGAMM tend to raise issues closely related to people's livelihoods. When our staff, colleagues or board members encounter problems in their daily lives, or when residents approach us with concerns, these issues are conveyed by UGAMM-affiliated legislators during assembly sessions.

One practical example involved elderly residents telling us that the crossing times at certain traffic lights were too short for them to cross the road safely. Our team conducted on-site investigations to assess the situation. Another recurring issue concerns water leakage in older buildings, which requires updates to the regulatory framework. These are the kinds of everyday concerns that our legislators raise in the Legislative Assembly after receiving and investigating feedback at neighbourhood level.

UGAMM has long been a close partner of the MSAR Government, supporting its work on livelihood-related issues. Neighbourhood associations across different districts are often involved in government initiatives related to the environment, public hygiene and community development. We hope to continue this role, and that the issues raised by our legislators can help advance development at community level.

UGAMM is also involved in business incubation programmes with large leisure and entertainment enterprises.

We do work with some leisure and entertainment companies on these programmes. In recent years, we have established a cultural incubation centre for local youth, with funding from a local leisure and entertainment enterprise. Young

UGAMM has long been a close partner of the MSAR Government, supporting its work on livelihood-related issues



UGAMM operates two schools and four nurseries across Macao

people from families facing difficulties, as well as talented students, can receive arts education there at affordable prices.

We offer courses in dance, piano, singing, painting and other art forms, with the aim of promoting artistic development. The programme has achieved encouraging results, with some students winning awards in public competitions.

How many offices and service points does UGAMM currently operate?

We have four offices across different districts in Macao to support our services. In total, we have 28 affiliated neighbourhood associations located throughout the city, as well as 34 service centres offering support ranging from childcare to elderly care.

As there is growing focus on the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, what plans does UGAMM have to extend its coverage beyond Macao?

In recent years, we have extended our service network to other parts of the Greater Bay Area beyond Macao. We now operate service points on Hengqin Island, in Gongbei in Zhuhai, and in Zhongshan.

Initially, our services were aimed at Macao identity card holders living elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area. However, Hengqin is now a region jointly developed by Macao and the country, and our services there have expanded to cover all residents, regardless of whether they hold Macao ID cards. In Hengqin, as in Macao, we provide support for people from infancy to old age. ■

TECHNOLOGY

LOW-ALTITUDE ECONOMY TAKES OFF

Text **Viviana Chan**



As the **low-altitude economy** gathers momentum across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, industry insiders argue that Macao's strategic value lies not in the scale or frequency of flights, but in its ability to provide high-standard, well-regulated scenarios that can help align cross-boundary rules and contribute to the development of international frameworks



Taking an “air taxi” across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area or using drones for urban goods delivery may soon become an everyday option for people and businesses alike. The low-altitude economy is widely seen as “taking off” across the region, where it is being positioned as a strategic emerging cluster at the intersection of technological innovation and economic diversification.

The term refers to economic activities conducted in airspace below 1,000 metres. It marks a shift from the isolated use of drone technologies towards a broader economic system that leverages low-altitude airspace for applications ranging from logistics and mobility to public services.

A report published last year by the international professional services firm Arup, “Planning for a Low-Altitude Economy in the Greater Bay Area”, described the region’s “interconnected cities, technological capabilities, and policy momentum” as making it “an ideal environment to pilot and scale low-altitude economy systems”. The region’s diversity in urban form and governance – with three different jurisdictions –, the report added, “provides a valuable testing ground for cross-boundary coordination and innovation.”

Guangdong Province already occupies a central position in China’s low-altitude landscape. According to data from the Guangdong Provincial Development and

✓ Macao signed agreements with Zhuhai and Guangzhou during December’s 2025 Conference on High-Quality Development of the Low-Altitude Economy in the Greater Bay Area



Reform Commission, the province hosted more than 15,000 low-altitude industry chain enterprises last year, accounting for about 30 percent of the national total. In 2024, Guangdong produced 6.94 million civilian drones, representing 95 percent of China's consumer-grade market and 54 percent of its industrial-grade segment.

Hong Kong is also moving proactively. Following the launch of a regulatory sandbox scheme, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is expected to issue its action plan on developing the low-altitude economy later this year. The aim is to position Hong Kong as a hub for low-altitude innovation and applications through institutional reform and technological advancement, according to comments made in January by Maisie Chan Kit-ling, the HKSAR's Commissioner for the Development of the Greater Bay Area.

Macao's role

China's forthcoming 15th Five-Year Plan, due to be submitted to the National People's Congress in March, is expected to identify the low-altitude economy as one of the country's strategic emerging industrial clusters. Observers say the Greater Bay Area, with its strong industrial base and economic dynamism, is not only fertile ground for sectoral growth but also well placed to act as a global pioneer and pilot zone.

"The low-altitude economy is a national strategic industry and a new engine for Greater Bay Area integration," said Tai Kin Ip, Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Macao Special Administrative

Region (MSAR) Government, speaking last December at the 2025 Conference on High-Quality Development of Low-Altitude Economy in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. He added that Macao would strengthen cooperation with neighbouring cities to contribute to the sector's development. At the same event, Macao signed agreements on cross-boundary low-altitude cooperation with Zhuhai and Guangzhou, respectively.

The MSAR's comparative advantage, analysts suggest, lies more in its institutional capacity and less in its industrial scale. Hon Chi Tin, a professor at the Institute of Systems Engineering at the Macau University of Science and Technology, argues that the city's strength is firmly grounded in its ability to support standard-setting and scenario-based demonstrations that can facilitate smoother cross-jurisdictional operations across Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

"The most appropriate positioning for Macao in the Greater Bay Area's low-altitude economy is not about how large the industry is or how many flights it operates, but about serving as a critical node for scenario-based demonstrations and the promotion of international standards," Prof. Hon told Macao Magazine. As the sector moves from concept to implementation, he said, jurisdictions that can first establish practical applications that are regulatable, assessable and



The low-altitude economy is a national strategic industry and a new engine for Greater Bay Area integration

Tai Kin Ip
Secretary for Economy and Finance
of the MSAR Government

replicable will gain an advantage in shaping rules and standards.

Low-altitude on the rise

Prof. Hon attributes the rapid rise of the low-altitude economy in the Greater Bay Area to a convergence of factors. National policy has incorporated it into efforts to cultivate new productive forces and strategic industries, while cities



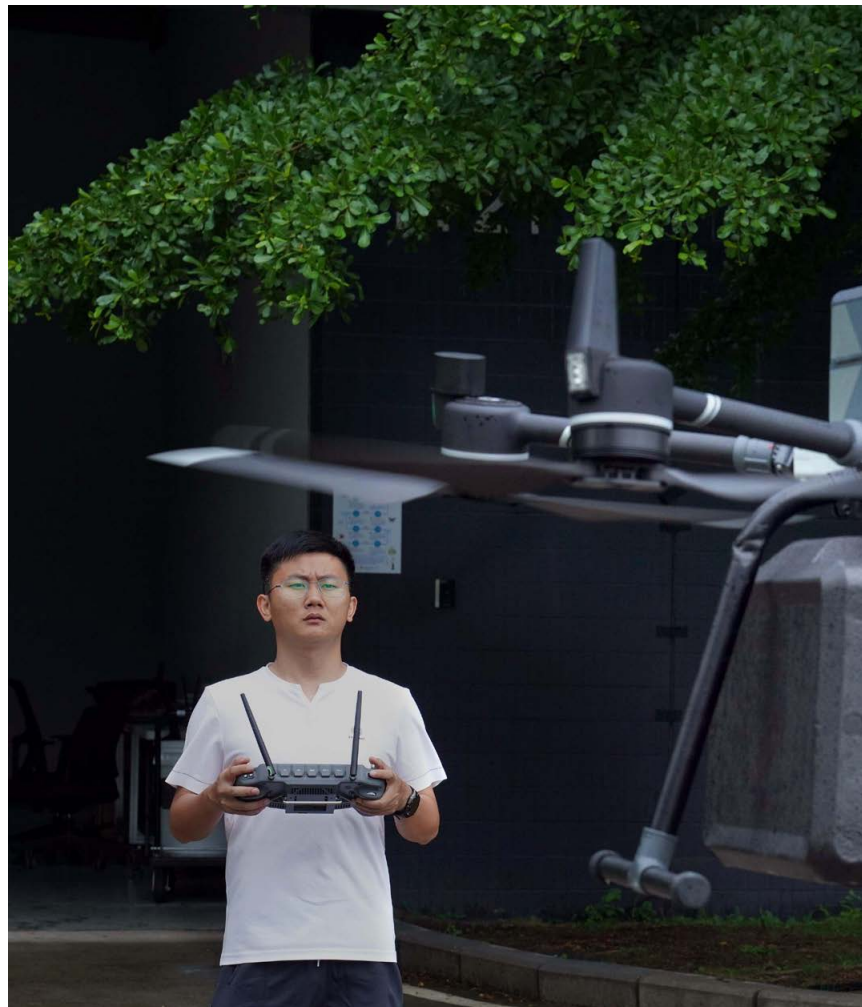
The most appropriate positioning for Macao in the Greater Bay Area's low-altitude economy is not about how large the industry is or how many flights it operates, but about serving as a critical node for scenario-based demonstrations

Hon Chi Tin
Scholar at Macau University
of Science and Technology

across the region are advancing pilot projects across multiple scenarios, creating a relatively comprehensive testing environment.

“The development of the low-altitude economy depends on the joint functioning of several core elements, including airspace access, aircraft, take-off and landing facilities, supporting infrastructure, safety and compliance frameworks, and real-world demand,” he said. “These elements are highly interdependent, and none of them can be absent.”

Ultimately, however, Prof. Hon



📍 A staff member tests an unmanned aerial vehicle at the Shenzhen base of drone manufacturer United Aircraft Group

argues that airspace governance remains the decisive factor, as only by clarifying airspace use and management rules can other elements be effectively mobilised and translated into operational, regulatable models. From this perspective, Macao's relatively constrained airspace and compact urban scale make it better suited to a "rules first, scenarios second" approach, he suggests. By validating safety and compliance under controlled conditions, Prof. Hon believes the city can build institutional experience that will be essential



for future cross-boundary commercial operations.

An evolving economy

Momentum accelerated in 2024, after the low-altitude economy was included for the first time in China's annual government work report by the State Council. Several cities quickly rolled out pilot schemes. Shenzhen launched what was described at the time as the world's first cross-sea, cross-city electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) route, linking Shenzhen and Zhuhai, with a demonstration flight in February 2024 cutting a two-hour road journey to just 20 minutes.

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport and Zhuhai Jinwan Airport have since established low-altitude flight service stations, while more than 30 low-altitude routes across the Greater Bay Area had entered testing by the end of last year, covering passenger transport, cargo delivery and emergency rescue.

The development of the low-altitude economy in Macao faces a more complex set of circumstances. The city has a land area of about 33 square kilometres, with limited usable airspace. Its airspace also overlaps significantly with flight zones associated to Zhuhai's airport and height-restricted zones linked to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge. Pursuing large-scale route expansion or flight volume is widely seen by observers as unrealistic.

Chao Ka Chon, a member of the Macao Legislative Assembly and



In dense urban areas, it may not be feasible to set up multiple launch points, and these issues still require further discussion

Chao Ka Chon
Macao legislator and
technology entrepreneur

a technology entrepreneur, told Macao Magazine that while many Chinese mainland cities have entered pilot operation phases, Macao is currently at a “preliminary planning” stage, with progress needing to balance safety and feasibility.

He noted that the Macao SAR Government has established a dedicated low-altitude economy task force, coordinated by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau, which held its first meeting last August to discuss strategy, application scenarios and regulatory frameworks. Even so, Mr Chao acknowledges practical limitations, including a high concentration of heritage buildings, with some areas designated as no-fly zones. Dense high-rise developments can create wind tunnel effects, while extensive glass façades may interfere with Global Positioning System (GPS) signals, he notes.

In addition, shipping channels, as well as cross-sea bridge corridors, are all designated no-fly areas. Taipa and Coloane also contain helicopter flight paths, further compressing Macao’s usable airspace for drones and other low-altitude aircraft. Areas appropriate for the development of take-off and landing sites, as well as supporting communications infrastructure, are also limited. “In dense urban areas, it may not be feasible to set up multiple launch points, and these issues still require further discussion,” he said.

Rather than pursuing scale-driven growth, Mr Chao argues that Macao should focus on regulatory alignment and application demonstration. Under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework, he suggests the city could help pilot mutual recognition mechanisms for

low-altitude economy standards covering data flows, insurance liability and operator qualifications within the Greater Bay Area. On the application side, potential niches include heritage tourism, filming, infrastructure inspection, and drone-based emergency rescue, developed in coordination with Hengqin’s industrial resources. This could lead to a collaborative model of “Macao-based research and development, Hengqin-based testing”, Mr Chao said.

Cross-boundary platforms

As China’s low-altitude economy shifts from experimentation to commercial operation, companies are increasingly focused on whether regulatory rules can be translated into workable, scalable business frameworks. Guangdong Low Altitude Economy Development Co., Ltd. has emerged as a key builder and operator of public low-altitude infrastructure in the province.

The sector’s real challenge, according to board director Lin Yutian, is whether system capability, data integration and public platforms can be implemented effectively, he told Macao Magazine.

Demand in the Greater Bay Area, he said, currently clusters around three areas: low-altitude logistics; public services such as emergency rescue and power line inspection; and low-altitude tourism and services including sightseeing flights and drone performances. To support these uses, Guangdong’s government



What companies care about most is not a single technical issue, but a systemic alignment of airspace, legal frameworks and regulatory regimes

Lin Yutian
Board director of Guangdong Low Altitude Economy Development Co., Ltd.

drone management platform for public-sector applications went online last December, enabling unified, network-based flight management through measures such as airspace grid allocation and centralised demand coordination.

Cross-boundary operations, however, remain complex. “What companies care about most is not a single technical issue,” Mr Lin said, “but a systemic alignment of airspace, legal frameworks and regulatory regimes.” Differences between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in areas such as airspace management, airworthiness certification (which grants authorisation to operate an aircraft in flight), pilot licensing and liability frameworks mean that progress must be gradual and coordinated at a higher policy level, he said.

Here, Macao’s institutional environment is seen as carrying particular weight. Mr Lin said the city is not only home to high-value potential application scenarios but also enjoys advantages in promoting cross-boundary communication and regulatory alignment. He added that the MSAR’s universities and research institutions are increasingly involved in international standards discussions, including initiatives led by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers – commonly known as IEEE – on low-altitude economy, which address flight safety, system interfaces and operational management.

Commercial rollout

Among the early movers in passenger-grade unmanned aviation is EHang Intelligent Equipment, a Guangzhou-based autonomous aviation firm listed on Nasdaq. The company says

it is now technically and operationally ready to begin commercial services.

“The company is ready to launch commercial operations and plans to progressively roll out eVTOL flight services through a reservation system in the short term,” said Wu Yachen, EHang’s vice-president, in an interview with Macao Magazine.

She stressed that commercialisation would be phased, following a “safety first, risk-progressive” approach. The company has already deployed its EH216-S aircraft and supporting system in real operating environments, accumulating hours of flight and operational experience.

Cities such as Macao, Ms Wu argued, are well suited to eVTOL applications due to their limited land area, high population density and tourism-led economies. With its compact size and vertical take-off and landing capability, EHang’s EH216-S aircraft could be used for sightseeing or as an urban air taxi, offering new mobility and tourism experiences, she said.

Looking ahead, Ms Wu said large-scale deployment across the Greater Bay Area would depend on clearer regulatory frameworks and technical standards, coordinated infrastructure development and greater public acceptance. Macao’s ability to establish a demonstration model that is both replicable and internationally compatible, she added, will be crucial in shaping the city’s pace and prospects of commercialisation in the low-altitude economy. ■



EHang is ready to launch commercial operations and plans to progressively roll out eVTOL flight services

Wu Yachen
Vice-president of autonomous aviation firm EHang

CHINA'S COSMIC LEAP INTO SPACE

Text **Tiago Azevedo**

China's space programme has made massive strides in recent years, with advanced satellites, a home-grown space station and the goal for an **historic moon mission by 2030**. Such endeavours, ranging from governmental to commercial sectors, are driving China's outer space diplomacy, with Macao moving to the centre of the country's space science efforts



China has in just a few decades, since launching its first satellite in 1970, transformed into one of the world's leading space powers. Missions such as the Chang'e lunar programme, the Tianwen-1 Mars rover, and the Tiangong Space Station ("Heavenly Palace space station") showcase not only technological achievement but also the ambition and scientific drive behind China's space programme.

In January 2022, the central authorities announced their latest white paper for outer space. The document, titled "China's Space Programme: A 2021 Perspective," laid out the country's goals for space-related development, spanning both government and commercial segments.

"To explore the vast cosmos, develop the space industry and build China into a space power is our eternal dream," stated President Xi Jinping, as highlighted in the document. According to the white paper, the space programme is a "critical element" of the overall national strategy, with China upholding the "principle of exploration and utilisation of outer space for peaceful purposes".

The strategy sets specific development and technological milestones for China's space programme within seven mission areas: space transport system; space infrastructure, including satellite development; manned spaceflight; deep space exploration; space launch sites and telemetry, tracking and command; experiments in new technologies; and space environment governance.

In 2025, China's space programme continued to expand with missions like Tianwen-2 for asteroid exploration and the Shenzhou-20 and 21 crewed spacecraft, the latter launched last October. The Tiangong space station (see on page 55) also strengthened its role as an international hub for scientific collaboration.

The successful launch of the Long March-7A carrier rocket on December 31 last year meant that the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC)


completed a record 73 space launch missions throughout 2025, the body said in a release.

The year before, China became the first country to collect rock and soil samples from the far side of the Moon, and, in 2021, it was the second country ever to release a rover – dubbed Zhurong – on Mars to study the planet's geology. The nation also has a fleet of satellites in space and plans for many more, while helping other countries launch their own satellites.

Professor Zong Qiugang, director of the Space Science Institute and the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences (SKLPlanets) at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), says China's rapid progress in space "comes down to a few clear,





The Data Centre for Science and Application of Macau Satellites was the first satellite data management facility established in the city 

sustained choices,” which include a “clear vision, sustained resources, investment in people and technology, and patience”.

“Long-term planning and steady investment created the runway for ambitious projects and incremental learning,” Prof. Zong told Macao Magazine in a written interview.

Clear roadmap

As China’s outer space exploration continues to grow, the country is preparing to send its first ‘taikonauts’ (the Chinese name for ‘astronauts’ coined from the Mandarin word taikong 太空) to the moon before 2030.

The plan is anchored in a new national mid- and long-term development programme for space science, unveiled in October

2024, which serves as a guideline for the country’s planning of space science missions and space research up to 2050.

The programme, the first of its kind at the national level, was jointly released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the China National Space Administration (CNSA) and the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). It outlines the development goals of China’s space science, including 17 priority areas under five key scientific themes, as well as a three-phase roadmap.

The five key scientific themes include the extreme universe, space-time ripples, panoramic view of Sun-Earth, habitable planets, as well as the biological and physical sciences in space, Ding Chibiao, vice president

of the CAS, said at a briefing to present the programme, according to a press release.

In the first phase, leading up to 2027, China is set to focus on the space station operation, implementing a manned lunar exploration project, and the fourth phase of its lunar exploration programme, as well as a planetary exploration project.

An international lunar research station will be developed during the second phase, between 2028 and 2035, while in the third phase, from 2036 to 2050, China plans to launch over 30 space science missions.

According to Prof. Zong, home-grown innovation and self-reliance, such as the BeiDou navigation system and the Long March rocket family, have helped build “technical independence and industrial capacity” over the years.

Additionally, “a strong pipeline of talent from universities and research institutes supplied the engineers and scientists needed to design, test and operate complex missions,” he noted.

The scholar also suggested that international engagement “provided useful exchanges” without “compromising” China’s “core capabilities”.



Macao can serve as a global data and analytics centre for space science

Professor Zong Qiang

Director of the Space Science Institute and the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences at MUST

“A track record of successful missions, from the Chang’e lunar programme to Tianwen-1 at Mars, has validated this approach,” he stated.

Macao’s leap forward

To help achieve long-term goals, scientific centres have been established at a number of locations, including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Prof. Zong noted that Macao has been involved in China’s lunar programme “from the very beginning”.

“Since 2005, our team has been involved in analysing and interpreting data from the Chang’e missions, especially in studying surface geology and space environments,” the scholar stated. “For instance, by examining Chang’e-5 and Chang’e-6 samples, we uncovered surprising patterns in how solar wind shapes the Moon’s surface. This has actually offered new insights into how Earth’s magnetic field shields the lunar near side,” he added.

Macao has also “contributed to designing and calibrating instruments” onboard some of the space missions. “This work has not only led to publications in top journals like Nature Astronomy, but also helped improve the reliability of mission payloads. Overall, this reflects Macao’s growing capabilities in both space instrumentation and advanced scientific analysis,” the SKLPlanets’ director said.

The facility at MUST, he noted, “is the first and only State Key Laboratory in China focused on astronomy and planetary science”. “I believe we play an essential role in supporting China’s lunar and deep-space exploration goals,” Prof. Zhong stressed.

The scholar said the laboratory’s role “is to drive cutting-edge research in areas like planetary environments and habitability, planetary formation, and space exploration, all supporting national projects such as lunar bases and deep-space missions”.

“Operationally, we play a central role in analysing data from missions like Chang’e

and Tianwen, turning raw information into real scientific insight,” Prof. Zong explained.

“We also bridge research and application by developing payloads for missions like Chang’e, Tianwen, and Chase [satellite]. And thanks to Macao’s “one country, two systems” framework, we’re able to act as an international gateway, bringing experts from around the world to collaborate more flexibly on China’s space projects,” he outlined.

Data from the Institute of Science and Technology Strategy Consulting of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, showed that between 2021 and 2025, MUST’s ranking in lunar science publications jumped from 13th to 7th globally.

“This leap in research output signifies that MUST has established world-class academic innovation capabilities in this field and lays a solid foundation for playing a more crucial role in the nation’s grand blueprint for deep space exploration,” Prof. Zong stated.

Payload development

From a role mostly focused on academic exchanges and some funding support, Macao has entered a stage of deep integration and even leadership in some areas of research related with the country’s space programme.

“We’re proposing missions, building instruments, and taking on roles in national science committees. Essentially, we’ve gone from the edge to the centre of China’s space science efforts,” Prof. Zong highlighted.

He said the laboratory’s capacity for sustainable development is demonstrated “by its deep involvement in major future national missions”.

“The team has completed a major transition from scientific analysis to payload development, and from collaborative participation to leading responsibilities,” the SKLPlanets’ director stated. “At present, the team is undertaking payload development tasks for a series of major upcoming national space missions, becoming an indispensable scientific and technological force”.

‘Heavenly Palace’ for scientific experiments

The Tiangong Space Station, meaning “Heavenly Palace”, is a permanently crewed modular space station operated by China in low Earth orbit, at an altitude of between 340 kilometres to 450 kilometres. Completed in 2022 with three modules – Tianhe (core), Wentian, and Mengtian – the space station hosts three taikonauts for six-month missions.

The first crew at Tiangong arrived in June 2021, when only the core module was in orbit, and since then a number of other crews have spent time at the station.

The Tianhe core module provides life support and living quarters for crew members and houses the station’s guidance, navigation, and orientation control systems. It is divided into three sections: living quarters, a service module, and a docking hub.

The two laboratory cabin modules – Wentian and Mengtian – support microgravity and freefall research. Wentian focuses primarily on life sciences, while Mengtian is oriented toward microgravity research.

According to the China Manned Space Agency, the space station deployed and implemented 265 science and application projects in orbit last year, and set multiple records. Such records included China’s first mammalian test subjects on a space station, the world’s first biological study conducted in a sub-magnetic and microgravity environment, as well as the longest single spacewalk task, according to an annual report released in early January 2026.

Meanwhile, a separate space telescope module, China Space Station Telescope (CSST), is due for launch this year. It is designed to operate independently alongside Tiangong, occasionally docking at the space station for maintenance, repairs and upgrades. Also known as “Xuntian”, which translates to “Survey the Heavens”, the telescope is said to have a 2-metre diameter mirror and a 2.5-billion-pixel camera.



Down to earth

China's first "ground-space station", the Space Environment Simulation and Research Infrastructure (SESRI), was launched in February 2024 in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province. It was hailed as another significant step to support the country's growing space ambitions.

Simulation tests provide vital information about what is possible in the space environment, conditions that are now simulated at SESRI, according to official Xinhua News Agency.

The facility covers an area equivalent to 50 football fields and can simulate a wide range of conditions to help understand the impact on spacecraft performance and human health.

Developed by the Harbin Institute of Technology and the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, it has simulation capabilities for nine space environment factors, including plasma, particle irradiation and solar electromagnetic radiation.

"Building such a basic scientific research platform that resembles the real cosmic space environment is akin to bringing a space station to Earth," Li Liyi, from the Institute of Space Environment and Material Science at Harbin Institute of Technology told Xinhua at the opening of the facility.

The facility has already served several domestic and international users, supporting the implementation of a series of major national aerospace missions.

Han Jiecai, president of the Harbin Institute of Technology and an academican of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, told the news agency that the research platform was of "great importance" to the country, as it would facilitate "major breakthroughs in scientific and technological innovation, industrial transformation and upgrading, and the cultivation of highly skilled talent".

Those endeavours include developing the Martian molecular and ionic composition analyser and participating in the development of a laser heterodyne spectrometer for the Tianwen-3 mission. The latter will be China's first Mars sample-return mission, scheduled for launch around 2028, with the goal of returning no less than 500 grammes of Martian samples to Earth by around 2031.

Other projects include: the Chase-2 mission, with the Macao laboratory leading the development of a medium-energy electron detector and a solar X-ray spectrometer; the Chang'e-7 mission, with the local team participating in the development of a lunar regolith water molecule analyser and a dust detector; and the Chang'e-8 mission, the joint development of a terrain probing drill for the International Lunar Rover. The laboratory is also responsible for developing a terrestrial gamma-ray flash monitoring system under the "International Meridian Circle Programme" – aimed at conducting all-weather observations and studying the space weather.

Prof. Zong said the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government "has also provided dedicated support for payload development" related to some of the space missions carried over the years.

China successfully sent two satellites of "Macao Science 1", a space exploration programme, into space in May 2023. It was the first space science satellite programme jointly developed by the Chinese mainland and Macao.

Macao Science 1 took a twin-satellite approach. While satellite A carried payloads like high-precision magnetometers to detect Earth's magnetic field, satellite B was equipped with high-energy particle detectors and solar X-ray instruments to obtain space environment data.

Inspiring the future

In another breakthrough, a Macao resident was selected in mid-2024 as a payload specialist for the fourth batch of taikonauts for China's manned space



programme, and is currently undergoing training before joining a spaceflight.

The selection of a Macao local for such role “shows that Macao is now truly part of China’s space exploration story,” Prof. Zong observed. “It confirms that Macao’s scientific expertise is trusted to conduct complex experiments on the space station, which is a real testament to our research quality.”

But just as importantly, he noted, it inspires young people. “Seeing someone from Macao possibly wear the taikonaut suit sends a powerful message that space isn’t out of reach anymore. It builds a deeper sense of national pride and shows our youth that their future has no limits,” the SKLPlanets’ director said.

Nurturing talent however requires a multi-pronged strategy, the scholar emphasised.

“Firstly, we must focus on interdisciplinary education. Space science requires a fusion of physics, geology, engineering, and computer science. Universities in Macao must continue to update their curricula to reflect these needs,” he suggested.

“Secondly, we must also provide hands-on opportunities. At SKLPlanets, we encourage students to participate in real research projects, such as analysing fresh satellite data or testing instrument prototypes, rather than just learning from textbooks,” Prof. Zong continued.

Another important step would be to “strengthen exchange programmes,” the scholar said. “We should send our students to top universities and research institutes for internships, and conversely, invite top scientists to mentor students here.”

Additionally, “public outreach via planetariums and competitions can spark interest early,” he added. “With commitment, Macao can produce a new generation driving China’s space developments.”

Looking ahead, Prof. Zong said Macao should shift from analysing data to developing payloads and proposing missions.

“Our goal is to design and build advanced instruments for China’s future satellites and deep-space probes,” he noted. “Macao can serve as a global data and analytics centre for space science. By establishing high-performance computing centres here, we can process and archive data not just for China, but for the international community,” he added.

Macao, the SKLPlanets’ director said, “can leverage its capital and commercial environment to explore commercial spaceflight opportunities, acting as a bridge to bring space technologies into the commercial market in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”.

“Thanks to Macao’s unique cultural role, we have a real opportunity to lead in space science outreach and education, inspiring young people here in Macao, across the Greater Bay Area, and beyond,” he concluded. ■



China launched the ‘Macao Science 1’ space exploration satellites in May 2023





PROFILE

GU YUE: LIFE AS ARTIST AND ACADEMIC

Text **Victoria Man Sok Wa**

Acclaimed artist and revered academic **Gu Yue** receives support from the China National Arts Fund for his oil painting “Pursuit – Setting Sail”, a work rooted in Macao’s cultural imagination

In a city famed for its glittering resorts and dazzling city lights, Macao's cultural heartbeat often lies in quieter corners: independent galleries, small studios and university campuses. It is here that Gu Yue has established himself as both an accomplished artist and a respected scholar. A professor at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), he was recently awarded funding from the China National Arts Fund for his oil painting "Pursuit – Setting Sail", known as "拼搏·起航" in the Chinese original.

The fund announced its list of 2026 project grants last December, with 13 applications from Macao selected. It marked the fifth time the city's cultural initiatives received national recognition, underscoring Macao's growing presence on China's arts landscape.

The selected projects span theatre, performance, fine arts and youth creativity. Prof. Gu's 'Pursuit – Setting Sail' was the only Macao proposal chosen under the category of individual artistic creation.

The painting seeks to capture the dynamism of Macao's dragon boat races, blending the physical intensity of competition with motifs drawn from Chinese traditions. Prof. Gu explained that the work employs imagery, colour and form through a visual language intended to resonate with the public, evoking a sense of cultural belonging within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. For him, the project is more than an artwork; it reflects a broader cultural identity and Macao's place within the national narrative.

"The reconciliation of historical reality and artistic truth carries

multiple layers of meaning," he told Macao Magazine. "In creating 'Pursuit – Setting Sail', I focused on how to address the relationship between historical authenticity and artistic authenticity."

Seeds of creativity

Prof. Gu's artistic journey began in Anhui province, long before his career took him to Beijing and later to Macao. Reflecting on his earliest encounters with art, he says that they were shaped not by formal institutions but by the domestic crafts of his childhood.

"My mother's embroidery transformed everyday fabrics into canvases of delicate motifs and animal figures," he recalled. "Those tactile encounters instilled in me a fascination with visual storytelling."

Literature soon expanded his horizons. Western classics such as Victor Hugo's "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" opened imaginative worlds far beyond Anhui, while closer to home, the masks and costumes of Sizhou opera – a local theatrical tradition – offered a vivid display of colour, drama and exaggeration. By primary school, he was already winning painting competitions.

This early enthusiasm evolved into formal training. He began structured art study during secondary school, graduating in fine arts from Anhui University in 1993. After eight years of professional practice, he pursued postgraduate studies at Xiamen University, before earning a doctorate in visual art theory and practice in 2008 at the Academy of Arts & Design at Tsinghua University.

Following his doctorate, Prof. Gu joined the National Museum of China in Beijing, where he spent nearly a

✓ Gu Yue's oil painting "Pursuit – Setting Sail" evokes a sense of cultural belonging in the Greater Bay Area



decade studying, working and raising a family. Immersed in the capital's cultural depth, he was moved by encounters with national treasures of exceptional significance. "It was on this basis that I pursued theoretical research and creative practice," he explained, "publishing academic monographs and articles, while also holding solo and group exhibitions."

Yet Beijing's grandeur brought its own challenges. "Within its weighty historical context, an individual's

awakening consciousness is subtly assimilated," Prof. Gu reflected.

"This tested my creative individuality and innovative capacity, particularly when confronted with the conceptual influences of contemporary art."

By contrast, Hong Kong and Macao offered a different perspective.

"During my years in Beijing, I often travelled to Hong Kong for exhibitions, and I grew fond of the region's urban character – its strong sense of locality and remarkable openness

to Western contemporary art,” he said. These experiences gradually reshaped his outlook. Eventually, Prof. Gu resigned from his post and moved to Macao, a city he believed could offer fresh inspiration for the next phase of his artistic life.

Artistic pursuits in Macao

“Beyond my teaching duties, artistic creation has always been a vessel for my emotions and a dwelling place for my thoughts,” he said. “Rather than saying that Macao itself has shaped my identity as an artist, it is more accurate to say that its urban landscapes – and the deconstruction and reconstruction of their visual imagery and symbolic forms – have consistently been central to my artistic pursuit.”

In 2015, Prof. Gu joined MUST’s Faculty of Humanities and Arts as an associate professor, teaching contemporary art theory and practice, among other subjects. Where Beijing carried the weight of history, Macao revealed a cosmopolitan openness. Its layered urban landscapes and

multicultural environment soon became recurring themes in his work, prompting him to deconstruct and reassemble the city’s visual symbols.

Prof. Gu’s artistic philosophy is informed by an ongoing dialogue between East and West. He draws on theories of traditional Chinese painting while engaging with Western philosophical concepts, an exchange that continues to shape his practice. “What drives me to keep creating is my artistic idealism and my deep love for art. I hope that what I devote my life to, can move others and inspire the public to pursue diverse understandings of beauty.”

At the core of his work lies an exploration of how visual narratives can balance factual representation with aesthetic interpretation. Prof. Gu regards Macao as especially fertile ground for this enquiry.

“The hybridity embedded in the cultures of Hong Kong and Macao represents a visual hallmark of modernity,” he said. “By contrast, modern Chinese art developed later elsewhere. These differences

Beyond my teaching duties, artistic creation has always been a vessel for my emotions and a dwelling place for my thoughts

Gu Yue
Artist and academic



➊ Macao’s urban landscapes are a central theme in Prof. Gu’s artistic work

have become central points of interest in my research.”

Celebrating Gu Yue’s achievements

Over more than two decades of academic inquiry and artistic practice, Prof. Gu has gained wide recognition. His 2016 monograph “Research on Thematic Oil Painting in the 20th Century” received backing from the National Publishing Fund, while later works were recognised in 2019 and 2022 by the Macao Foundation’s Outstanding Achievement Awards for Macao Research in Humanities and Social Sciences. In 2017, he was awarded a research grant by the Cultural Affairs Bureau for his project “Images and Appreciation – The Art of Sculpting in Macao in Light of Sino-foreign Art Exchanges”.

His academic career has also included appointments as a researcher at the Wu Guanzhong Art Research Center at Tsinghua University and as a visiting researcher at Peking University, two of China’s most prestigious higher education institutions.



As an artist, Prof. Gu was admitted to the China Artists Association in 2017. Two years later, his work “Raising the Flag in the Land of Lotus” received a Distinction Award at the Macao Museum of Art’s Open Call for Artworks of Macao Artists 2019. The initiative culminated in a special exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, where Prof. Gu’s work was subsequently acquired for the museum’s permanent collection.

The future of Macao’s art landscape

Looking ahead, Prof. Gu speaks candidly about the challenges facing Macao’s artists. Exhibition spaces remain limited, large-scale venues are scarce, and transporting sizeable works across borders can be cumbersome. Internationally, he notes, high-level exchanges and exhibitions featuring Macao artists are still relatively few. Yet he remains optimistic.

As both artist and academic, Prof. Gu sees the cultivation of young talent as one of Macao’s most pressing cultural priorities. With comparatively few local students pursuing postgraduate degrees in fine arts, he argues that training must be targeted and purposeful.

“On the one hand, I emphasise Macao’s cultural distinctiveness, guiding and encouraging students to explore the diversity of local traditions,” he said. “On the other, I actively recommend that Macao’s youth take part in exhibitions and projects at home and abroad, broadening their artistic horizons and enriching both their theoretical and practical work.” ■

EXHIBITION

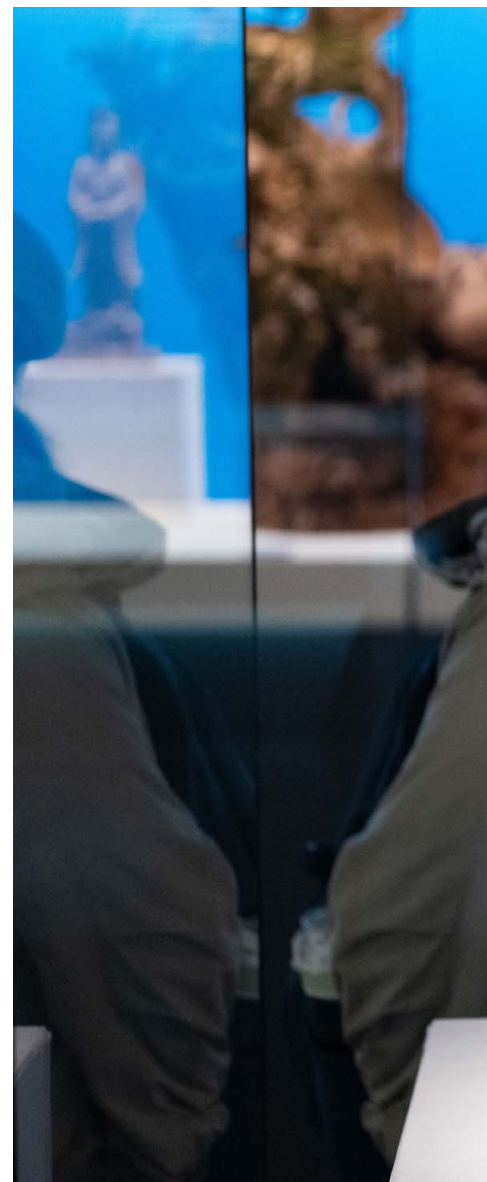
LINGNAN'S HERITAGE

Text **Nelson Moura**
Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

The Macao Museum has creatively woven together the multi-layered tapestry of **Lingnan cultures** in an immersive exhibit. The “New Momentum – Cultured Bay Area, Brilliant Intangible Cultural Heritage” is far more than a static collection of artifacts; it is a thoughtfully curated journey through the “living wisdom” of the Lingnan people – proof that heritage is still very much alive

Perched upon the historic stone ramparts of Mount Fortress, part of the Macao Museum has been transformed into a vibrant portal where the ancient and the modern embrace. The “New Momentum – Cultured Bay Area, Brilliant Intangible Cultural Heritage: Showcase of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Intangible Cultural Heritage”, now on until

March 15 in the Exhibition Gallery of the museum, features over 50 intangible cultural heritage items and more than 100 exhibits, combining craftsmanship, digital interactivity, and creative crossovers to celebrate the wisdom and creativity passed down through generations in the Lingnan region. Lingnan is a geographic and cultural region in southern China defined as the area south of



COMES TO LIFE

The “New Momentum” exhibition celebrates the wisdom and creativity of Lingnan with over 50 heritage items and more than 100 displays ✔



the Nanling Mountains.

As visitors walk through the halls, they are invited to experience what the exhibition calls a “source of life inexhaustible” – a cultural lineage that refuses to remain frozen in time.

The timing of this showcase is no coincidence. It aligns with the high-octane energy of the 15th National Games, creating a unique synergy where the spirit of athletic competition meets the endurance of cultural

heritage. In this curated space, the four dimensions of the exhibition – Colour, Form, Sound, and Concept – take on new meaning. Colour represents the vibration of vitality, Form captures the elegance of movement, Sound echoes the rhythm of competition, and Concept aspires to the supreme mastery of excellence.

The exhibition allows the public to “learn about the techniques of intangible cultural heritage rooted

in the traditional Lingnan culture and experience the Eastern aesthetics of the intangible cultural heritage refined through the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures as embodied in the Greater Bay Area,” according to the exhibition organisers.

Sounds of Lingnan

To truly understand the Lingnan region is to listen to it. The exhibition’s “Play of Sounds” dimension is rooted in a profound traditional



Visitors can immerse themselves in the region's intangible cultural heritage

Chinese aesthetic: that “the great sound is tenuous,” and “sounds and scenes are interwoven as one”. Here, sounds are treated as an art in time: fragile yet powerful cultural threads that tug at the heartstrings and construct a collective memory that echoes through the stadiums of the mind. The soundscape of the region is a complex, multi-layered tapestry that transitions from the melodic, high-pitched instrumental rhythms of the Cantonese Opera stage to the haunting, solitary chords of Naamyam narrative singing.

Naamyam, specifically the “Dishui Nanyin” style, holds a special place in the exhibit. Historically performed by blind singers – men known as Gushi and women as Shiniang – it makes use of colloquial lyrics to tell epic, improvised tales of romance and folklore. The Gushi typically played the zheng and yehu as accompaniments, keeping time with a clapper, while the Shiniang often played the yangqin (hammered dulcimer) or qinqin (Chinese long lute). These performances were a masterclass in oral tradition, with stories that could last ten minutes or stretch into serial narratives spanning months.

But the sounds of the Greater Bay Area are far more diverse. Visitors can hear the Tuna Macaense songs in the Patuá dialect,

which beautifully blends Portuguese and Cantonese musical elements, alongside the fluid, meditative melodies of the Guqin. The Guqin, or “Qin”, is an ancient seven-stringed instrument whose creation – involving nine painstaking stages – is an art form unto itself, elegantly termed “Zhuoqin”.

Interactive martial arts

The exhibition also brilliantly bridges the gap between ancient combat and 21st-century technology through the “Wing Chun: Legacy” project. A collaborative effort between the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and the Guangdong Cultural Centre, it transforms the philosophy of martial arts into an interactive digital experience. Players assume the role of an apprentice, navigating four themed scenarios where they interact with virtual books, weapons, and acupuncture charts to grasp the deep philosophy behind Wing Chun’s efficient strikes.

Beyond Wing Chun, the exhibition honours the Mok Family Martial Arts, one of the “Five Great Famous Styles” of Guangdong province. Originating in Huizhou nearly 300 years ago, this style is renowned for its vigorous fist movements and flexible, diverse kicks. It is a rare

technical hybrid, combining the heavy strength of Southern styles with the agile footwork typically associated with Northern martial arts.

These martial traditions are complemented by the Xianshui Saltwater Songs, the tradition of the Tanka boat people. These “question and answer” songs, sung in Cantonese dialect, cover every aspect of life from fishing to courtship, serving as a social thread that binds the coastal communities together.

Fire, clay and paper

The “Creation with Geometry” section shifts the focus to the tangible – the interplay of myriad lines and the philosophy of cosmic order. This is most vividly expressed through the region’s world-class ceramics. The traditional Cantonese architectural ridge ornaments, often called “Gongzai” or figure ridges, are a testament to the harmony between clay, glaze, fire, and art. These ornaments are crafted using ancient wood-firing techniques in “Loong” (dragon) kilns. Success in this field relies entirely on a master’s decades of experience to navigate the three distinct temperature zones of the kiln, ensuring that the elaborate figures and floral patterns bake perfectly.

The Shiwan ceramic sculpture technique further

emphasises this humanistic appeal. Categorised into five types – figures, animals, vases, miniatures, and ridge ornaments – the process requires highly refined clay and a deep understanding of traditional glazes.

Similarly, the porcelain of Guangzhou features the unique “Zhijin” or gold-weaving technique, an innovative method that creates an effect of “stacked gold and accumulated jade” on white porcelain. By the 1930s, these workshops moved to Hong Kong and Macao, where artisans adapted the motifs – incorporating folk symbols alongside customised designs tailored to Western tastes – while meticulously

preserving the Lingnan soul.

The exhibition also celebrates the “soft” arts that define the domestic and festive life of the region. Cantonese embroidery, or Guangzhou embroidery, is a masterclass in texture and light. Using over 30 distinct methods of point, via velvet, gold, silver, and bead threads, embroiderers depict intricate textures by carefully manipulating the direction of their stitches. The five primary techniques – nailing, quilting, mounting, embellishing, and layering – allow for a vast range of themes that balance shadow and brilliance.

The Guangdong paper-cutting technique is equally impressive. In Foshan, artists

use scissors for freehand work or specialised chisels for more complex designs, sometimes carving through 20 to 100 sheets of paper in a single session. These cuttings, featuring themes of good luck and longevity, find their way onto the “deng se”, also known as Foshan coloured lanterns. These lanterns depict scenes of celebration and operatic legends, often adorned with shimmering copper cutouts.

Supporting these are the Foshan New Year Woodblock Prints, which use a special “Eternal Red” background. These prints, whether hand-painted or wood-carved, serve to protect the home and invite blessings, characterised by bold lines and full-coverage



👉 Interactive digital experiences bring the exhibit to life



Portuguese tiles are a beautiful example of cross-cultural craftsmanship in Macao at the exhibit's "Colours of Lingnan" section

compositions. This vibrant visual style is also seen in Longmen Farmer Paintings, which use exaggerated forms and intense colours to reflect nature, love, and rural society, blending elements of ink painting, watercolour, and traditional embroidery.

East and West fusion

Macao's specific heritage is a highlight of the "Colours of Lingnan" section, showcasing a history of cultural exchange. The production of Portuguese tiles is a beautiful example

of this cross-cultural craftsmanship. The process is gruelling: moulding raw clay, an initial firing, applying an enamel base, hand-painting the motif, and a second firing at up to 1,100°C for eight hours.

Another local treasure is the carving of sacred images in wood, a craft born from the religious beliefs of local fishermen. This art form incorporates techniques from the Ningbo sect as well as foreign influences from Myanmar. The works range from deities worshipped

by fishermen to large-scale public Buddhist statues, involving a complex process of sanding, priming, gilding with lacquer, and applying gold leaf.

Even the game of Mahjong has a place in this cultural voyage. Originally made from animal bone and bamboo – a process known as "bamboo scraping" – Mahjong pieces represent a declining hand-carved tradition.

But no exploration of Lingnan culture is complete without the "Southern Awakening Lion". This integrated art form combines sculpture, painting, and embroidery. The technique for making the lion heads, especially in Shilong, follows strict traditional material choices: bamboo for the structure, paper gauze for the skin, and a handmade starch paste for adhesion. The six-stage process creates a vivid creature that serves as a powerful symbol of community identity and bravery.

As the journey through the Macao Museum concludes at the section titled "The End – Or the Beginning?", visitors are left with a vital realisation: tradition is not a "rootless sprout". Its power comes from the creative reinterpretation of an ancient DNA: the colours, forms, sounds, and concepts that have defined Lingnan for centuries. ■

KARATE

FAST AND GLORIOUS

Text **Victoria Man Sok Wa**
Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

After securing **Macao's first women's gold** at the National Games, karateka Fong Man Wai is preparing for her next challenge on the Asian Games stage

Last November, Macao witnessed a watershed moment in its sporting story. On the tatami of the 15th National Games of the People's Republic of China, 26-year-old karateka Fong Man Wai clinched gold in the women's under-55kg kumite event, becoming the first female athlete from Macao to win a title at the Games.

The achievement carried added resonance. Her victory came on home soil, as the Macao Special Administrative

Region (SAR) co-hosted the Games alongside Guangdong province and the Hong Kong SAR.

Ms Fong's journey into karate began at the age of 12, when her mother introduced her to the sport through an uncle. At first, her motivation was simple.

"When I was a teenager, I started to gain weight and my classmates picked on me," she recalled in an interview with Macao Magazine. "Practising karate was just a hobby, a way to slim

down. I wasn't ambitious at all in the beginning."

Double happiness

What began as a pastime soon revealed itself as a calling. One family member, in particular, would shape the course of her sporting life: her younger brother, Fong Man Hou, a fellow member of Macao's karate team. Ms Fong admits that envy of her brother's early successes initially drove her forward, but what began as sibling rivalry gradually evolved into a deeper passion for the sport.

She became fascinated by the contrast she observed in elite athletes: playful and relaxed away from the tatami, yet intensely disciplined and focused once competition



⬆ Karateka Fong Man Wai won last November Macao's first-ever National Games gold medal in a women's event

began. That persuaded her to take karate seriously, and it soon became the defining pursuit of her youth.

When she first committed herself to a competitive path, her parents worried that her enthusiasm might prove short-lived. Over time, however, her persistence and discipline reassured them, and they became her strongest supporters.

Success followed. Ms Fong began collecting medals and trophies, including an early

international breakthrough in 2018 with a bronze medal at the Asia Junior & Cadet and U21 Championships in Okinawa, Japan.

Fast forward to November last year. Anticipation was high in Macao as the city hosted a number of sporting events as part of the National Games, including karate. On November 6, the Macao karate team secured first place in the men's team kata category – the territory's first-ever gold at the Games.

Among the team members were Kuok Kin Hang, Iong Kuang Hou and Fong Man Hou, Ms Fong's younger brother.

Two days later came another surge of celebration. Ms Fong carved her own place in history, winning Macao's first-ever National Games gold medal in a women's competition.

Despite her petite frame, according to her coach, Supa Ngamphuengphit of Thailand, what sets Ms Fong



With this first National Games gold medal for women's karate, I feel it is not only a personal milestone but also a chance to inspire other girls

Fong Man Wai

✔ As part of her training for the National Games, Ms Fong sparred regularly with male athletes to adapt to faster, more demanding bouts



apart is her speed. “She has learnt to turn her weakness into her greatest advantage,” said Mr Supa, himself a kumite gold medallist at the 2017 and 2019 Southeast Asian Games. “She uses her stature to fight faster, and her speed continues to improve whenever she gives her best.”

Ms Fong first caught the attention of Macao’s karate community after winning an event at the sport’s Macao Open. The memory remains vivid. “That was the first time I truly challenged myself and succeeded,”

she said. “Even now, I can still recall the joy of that moment. It was because I wanted to hold on to that happiness that I decided to join the Macao team and take on bigger challenges.”

Training and meditation

Preparation for the 2025 National Games began four years earlier. A series of training and funding programmes were launched to nurture athletes capable of representing Macao. These initiatives extended beyond routine practice, incorporating specially

designed courses and intensive training sessions. Many athletes trained at least 10 hours a week as required by the programme, and on top of this, they had to put in their own regular 15 hours of weekly training.

Selection to represent Macao in the 15th National Games was highly competitive. Athletes had to place in the top eight at least once across two preliminary rounds to secure a spot in the final selection stage.

One of Ms Fong’s fiercest competitors was a younger teammate whose talent

sharpened her resolve. “At my very first preliminary, I took first place and earned a seeded qualification,” she said. “My younger peer finished third, and together we advanced to the final stage.”

Securing her place in the National Games squad was an emotional milestone. “I was overwhelmed with happiness,” she said. “It gave me even greater anticipation for the future – an eagerness to keep that feeling alive and to continue striving for more.”

The Games themselves presented new challenges. Accustomed to competing in the under-50kg category, Ms Fong had to move up

to under-55kg – the lowest weight class available for women at the Games – placing her against taller and stronger opponents.

“She is shorter than the other athletes in this category, so we needed to work harder,” her coach said. Training focused on enhancing her speed, agility, and footwork, enabling her to outmanoeuvre physically larger competitors. She also sparred regularly with male athletes to adapt to faster, more demanding bouts.

Mental preparation proved equally important. Mr Supa introduced meditation as a core component of training, helping athletes manage pressure during competition.

“For the National Games, we prepared for four years to reach the final,” Ms Fong said. “It would be a great pity to lose because of nerves or psychological instability – and that happens often. Meditation was a core element of my success in winning the gold medal.”

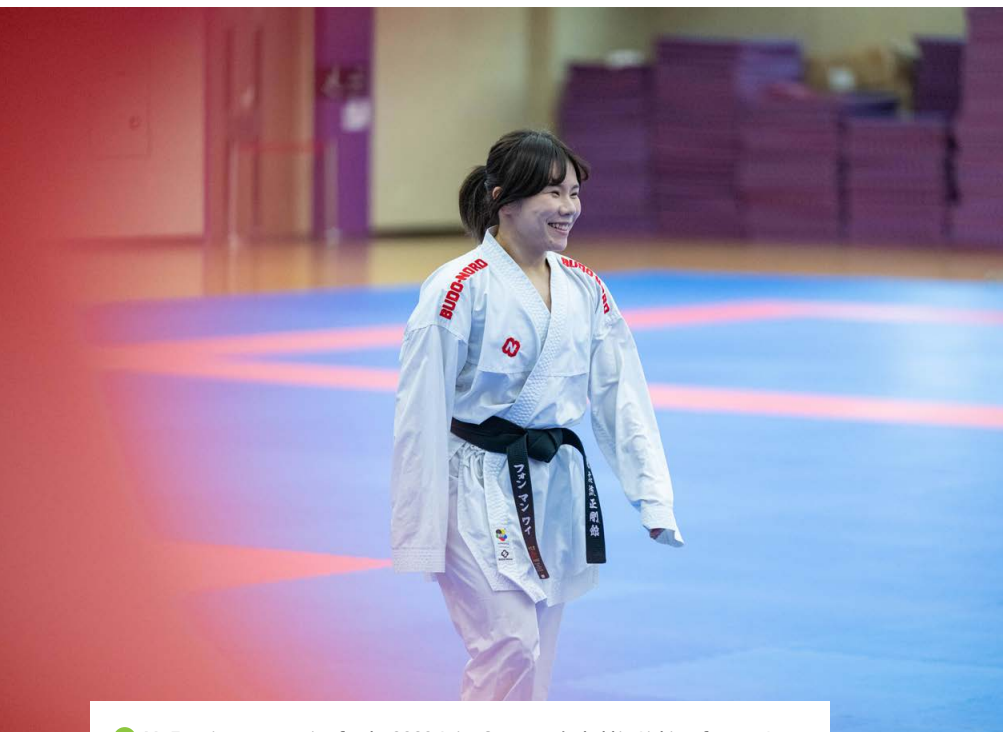
The golden moment

When her name was announced as the gold medallist, Ms Fong said she was overcome with gratitude. “At that moment, I was not just happy for myself,” she recalled, “but for the entire environment – the people who supported me, the audience who cheered, and the sport itself.”

Behind the success lay years of hard work. During the most difficult periods, she said, her greatest source of support was her younger brother. “He was not only family, but also my teammate. We grew up together, entered the Macao squad side by side, and our lives and training became almost completely intertwined.”

Macao shared in her triumph. Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai publicly congratulated the Macao karate team for securing three gold and two bronze medals overall at the 2025 National Games.

Ms Fong’s success did not emerge in isolation. It builds on the legacy of earlier female



Ms Fong is now preparing for the 2026 Asian Games, to be held in Aichi prefecture, Japan



karate athletes from Macao, including Paula Carion, now retired, who represented the SAR internationally and won multiple medals at Asian-level competitions.

“In Macao, people traditionally expect girls to pursue gentler, quieter hobbies,” Ms Fong said. “With this first National Games gold medal for women’s karate, I feel it is not only a personal milestone but also a chance to inspire other girls. I want the next generation of athletes to carry forward our efforts, step confidently onto the international stage, and strive for more medals and greater success.”

Participation in karate has been steadily increasing in Macao. Yet Ms Fong believes the local karate community still has room to grow. “We hope that through this achievement more resources will be invested, encouraging wider involvement and inspiring more people to take part,” she said.

She intends to contribute to that growth beyond competition. Alongside her athletic career, Ms Fong has earned both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in physical education and sports science, followed by a postgraduate diploma in education at the University of Saint Joseph in Macao.

“I hope to use schools and other channels to introduce

*Fong Man Wai
uses her stature
to fight faster,
and her speed
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whenever she
gives her best*

Supa Ngamphuengphit
Macao’s karate team coach

more young people to karate, offering them a new stage on which to showcase their talent and giving them greater opportunities to develop,” Ms Fong says.

Next mission: Asian Games

For now, her focus remains on competition. Ms Fong plans to stay with the Macao team while completing her professional training as a sports educator.

“As long as I still have the ability, retirement from competition is not something I will consider,” she said. “When the time eventually comes, I hope to devote myself to coaching or education.”

Her immediate target is the 2026 Asian Games, to be held in Aichi prefecture,

Japan, from September 19 to October 4. With just months to go, preparation is in full gear.

The event will mark her second appearance at the Asian Games. She made her debut in Hangzhou in 2023, after that edition of the Games was postponed from 2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic: she exited in the quarterfinals. “Although I did not win a medal in my first outing, this time I am determined to challenge for gold,” she said.

Looking further ahead, Ms Fong remains confident about the future of karate in Macao. “Watching the progress of my younger teammates only strengthens my conviction that this goal will, in time, be realised.” ■



Colours of devotion, Filipino style

Photo feature by Lei Heong leong









Rhythm, colour and devotion define the **Sinulog Macau Festival**, a cornerstone of the Filipino community's cultural calendar in Macao. Drawing inspiration from the celebrated Sinulog Festival in Cebu City, Philippines, the event honours the "Santo Niño" – the child Jesus – through music, movement and ritual. Established in 2003, the Macao festival is best known for its vibrant parade, where dancers in ornate costumes transform religious tradition into spectacle. ■



BRICK & STORY

A LIVING REMINDER OF MACAO'S PAST

Text **Marco Carvalho**
Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

A verdant whisper amid Macao's urban roar, the **UNESCO-listed Casa Garden** has served many significant roles over the past two-and-a-half centuries. Today, the historic manor carries on its enduring legacy of bridging trade and cultural exchange between China and the West

In the heart of a bustling Macao lies a hidden gem. Amid high-rises and crowded streets – Casa Garden – a grand 18th-century manor with a magnificent white façade, pastel pink accents and dark green-shuttered windows, proudly stands in its own 'pocket of peace' in Macao. It is a striking reminder of Macao's tranquil past, yet remains a living testament to the rich cultural ties between East and West.

Built around 1770, the specific details of Casa Garden's origins remain shrouded in mystery. Located in the Santo António

district, the land where Casa Garden stands was originally owned by the Society of Jesus until 1762. A wealthy Portuguese merchant, Manuel Pereira, known for his significant investments in the city, is believed to have commissioned the construction of the mansion and resided there, but no documentary evidence has been found to support this. It is known, however, that Mr Pereira was deeply connected to the history of Casa Garden, having acquired it in 1815. While he may not have lived in the mansion himself, when his





📍 Casa Garden, an 18th-century manor set amidst lush greenery

youngest daughter Maria Ana Pereira married Lourenço Pereira Marques, the building became the property of the young couple.

While its origins may be surrounded in mystique, the historical significance of Casa Garden is well attested. The mansion has taken on many important roles over the years. In the 1780s it was leased to William Fitzhugh, and so to the British East India Company, becoming their headquarters in Macao. Over the next five decades, until 1838, the manor hosted officials such as

Sir George Thomas Staunton and Lord George Macartney, turning into a focal point of international trade and intrigue. After his ill-fated diplomatic mission to Beijing, Lord William Amherst was said to have sought solace in the mansion's shaded veranda.

Casa Garden also once welcomed the heir to the throne of France, Charles X, and former United States president, Ulysses S. Grant, before being used as a war munitions depot and becoming, in 1937, Macao's first modern museum.

✓ The mansion carries on its enduring legacy of bridging cultural ties between China and the West



More recently, over the past four decades, Casa Garden has served as the headquarters for the Orient Foundation (Fundação Oriente) – a key pillar for strengthening ties between China and Portugal. In 2005, Casa Garden was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site, becoming one of 22 designated buildings within the Historic Centre of Macao – a prestigious honour recognising the mansion's significant historical value.

Serving many roles

Over the last two-and-a-half centuries, Casa Garden has known neglect and revival. In the late 1830s, Maria Ana Pereira and Lourenço Caetano Marques took up residence in the mansion. The estate remained in private use until 1885, when then Governor Thomas de Souza Rosa purchased it, for the sum of 35,000 patacas, “the house and land called the Camões Grotto”.

Once it became public property, the manor was put to different uses. It belonged to the Department of Public Works, and it had a brief run as a war munitions depot, before being transformed into the local branch of the Portuguese National Press, an archive and, later, the Luís de Camões Museum.

By the later part of the 20th century, the Orient Foundation stepped in as the manor's guardian. Dedicated to bridging East and

West, the institution acquired Casa Garden on May 18, 1989, and made it their local headquarters. Soon after, the residence underwent a major overhaul, the largest in its over 200-year history. Working with engineers José Silveirinha, António Andrade e Pereira Coutinho, architect Carlos Marreiros oversaw the challenging refurbishment.

“The project was ambitious because the building was very old. Like many of the oldest dwellings built in Macao, Casa Garden was devised using a technique that was quite common at the time, the so-called socle. The socle was a short plinth used to raise the building, so that it wouldn't have direct contact with the soil moisture,” Mr Marreiros explained. “Casa Garden had a very good socle, but it was not deep enough to be put into use. We were asked by the Orient Foundation to transform that space into a gallery and an auditorium. As soon as we proceeded to the excavations, we discovered a natural spring rushing beneath our feet.”

Stones, shadow and birdsong

Hollowing out the historical mansion's basement was, nevertheless, only a part of the rehabilitation process. An innovative glass roof was installed over the manor's inner patio and a brand-new building, used ever since to host artistic residencies, was added

to the domain, as well as a small fishpond, surrounded by plants and vegetation.

As demanding as it was, the intervention was as undistruptive as possible, to enhance and highlight the original characteristics of the building, Mr Marreiros explained. As such, Casa Garden remains a neoclassical beauty rising from the earth, its two-story frame elevated on a noble plinth, accessed by a grand granite staircase that seems to ascend towards the heavens. Symmetrical and serene, its façade boasts arched windows framed in green shutters, allowing the breeze to dance through its rooms.

“There is more to architecture than just the stones. The experiences – the people, the sounds, the smells – are way more important than the stones when it comes to heritage,” Mr Marreiros described.

“One of the defining features of Macao’s traditional architecture was the fact that the doors and the windows were always open to allow for natural ventilation. Along with the open shutters, there was a constant din of birds and that was one of the characteristics that we wanted to keep,” the architect affirmed.

He added: “This atmosphere – the birdsong outside, the shadows of the arches drawn on the walls – created a sense of time that doesn’t exist anymore. It takes visitors back in time to an era when everything was slower, everything was calmer and there wasn’t much stress.”

By the early 2020s, the building showed, once again, signs of age. Cracks appeared in its plaster and rain seeped through its roof, forcing the Orient Foundation to launch, in late 2024, a major five-month overhaul. The reopening, in June 2025, has allowed the site to resume its function as a venue for exhibitions, lectures and cultural exchange, reinforcing Casa Garden’s unrivalled status as a living link between Macao’s past and present.

Restoring a grande dame

Surrounded by lush greenery, the property’s gardens extend into what is now Camões



It’s a privilege, but at the same time, a big responsibility to operate in a place imbued with so much history

Catarina Cottinelli da Costa

Director of the Macao delegation of the Orient Foundation

Garden, and the enduring connection remains a defining feature. Together, they form a sanctuary where time slows and the soul finds respite from the relentless pulse of modern life, says Catarina Cottinelli da Costa, Director of the Macao delegation of the Orient Foundation and architect who was instrumental in overseeing the most recent restoration of the historic headquarters.

“It’s obviously a huge privilege to work in a manor like this,” Ms Cottinelli da Costa said. “In a heavily populated place like Macao, this space is truly a pocket of peace and tranquillity. It has a delightful garden, that coexists harmoniously with the adjacent park – Camões Garden was once part of the property. We can hear the birds chirping outside the windows, we have squirrels roaming around. I mean, it’s a privilege, isn’t it? I believe there’s no comparable place in Macao.”

“It’s a privilege, but at the same time, a big responsibility to operate in a place imbued with so much history,” she added. “Deep down, this house is like an old lady, and we need to take good care of her.” ■

Lights, culture, action

Rita Wong, who helms indie film house Cinematheque·Passion, reveals her must-see Macao films and explains why the city's emerging cinema culture deserves to be in the spotlight

Text **Margarida Vidinha**

Photos **Oswald Vas**

Name

Rita Wong Yeuk Ying

Title

Director of CUT Lda., operating director of Cinematheque·Passion (August 2023 – July 2026)

Place of birth

Hong Kong

Years living in Macao

Since a toddler

Macao in one word

Spectacular

Where is your favourite place to watch a film in Macao, and why?

Definitely Cinematheque·Passion. It is the only arthouse cinema in Macao. We are very proud to have one here, so that we do not need to travel elsewhere to experience this kind of programming.

Which three Macao films should audiences be watching right now?

The first is "Kissing the Ground You Walked On" (2022), a feature-length film by Hong Heng Fai. It was selected for several international film festivals and marked a milestone in the development of Macao cinema. The second is "Girlfriends", directed by Tracy Choi Ian Sin, which is currently screening. It tells a story of growth, friendship and love among a group of young women from Macao, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The third is "Revisit", the 2024 feature debut by Harriet Wong Teng Teng. It focuses on a grandchild's story across two places and three generations.



What is the most memorable film scene ever shot in Macao?

For me, it is an animated film about Macao, "The Lighthouse" (2019), directed by Jay Lei Pui Weng. The lighthouse scenes are memorable. The Guia Lighthouse has been part of local life for a long time. I have been able to see it from my home since childhood. In the film, you watch the landscape around the lighthouse change, and that resonated with me.

A divisive question: cinema snacks – yes or no? And if so, what is the ultimate Macao cinema snack?

Yes, but only at commercial cinemas. Caramel popcorn, of course. It is a childhood memory that lasts forever. For arthouse cinemas, I would say no. Arthouse films demand a higher level of concentration from the audience than commercial films.

If you had to recommend one film that captures the spirit of Macao, what would it be?

"Ah Ming's Macao". It is a 1995 short feature directed by Albert Chu Iao Ian, and I think it remains one of the most important films for the people of Macao. It captures the essence of the city and its people, and I believe it was the first feature film about Macao's culture made by a local filmmaker. It is a very important work.

What misconception do people often have about film culture in Macao?

Many people still think there are very few, or even no Macao films at all. While the local film scene is still in a stage of development, many short films, animated works and documentaries have actually been produced since 2000.

Why should audiences pay attention to Cinematheque·Passion's programming?

Cinematheque·Passion is a truly unique hub where audiences can watch world cinema, Chinese cinema and Macao cinema. It brings together pioneering works alongside classic selections.

What excites you most about the future of cinema in Macao?

A group of energetic young filmmakers is establishing its own cinematic identity, free from the constraints of the past.



Festival

SING, DANCE, PARADE

Since it began 15 years ago in 2011, the Macao International Parade continues to bring talented local artists and global performing art groups to the streets of Macao each year. Dressed in distinctive costumes showcasing a variety of styles, the performers create a vibrant atmosphere as they sing and dance around the city's iconic cultural monuments. This year's parade will begin at the Ruins of St. Paul's and conclude at Sai Van Lake Square.

MARCH 29 | AFTERNOON |
MULTIPLE LOCATIONS | FREE ADMISSION



Tour

HERITAGE WALKABOUT

A new walking tour has been added to the Cultural Affairs Bureau's thematic website, Macao Cultural Heritage Trails. Launched at the start of 2026, the Historic Centre of Macao Route links landmarks such as the A-Ma Temple and the Ruins of St Paul's. Designed as a self-guided experience, it is presented through a combination of text, images, video, and interactive maps. The new addition joins two existing trails on the platform: the Macao Maritime Silk Road Historic Sites Route and the Route of Historic Buildings with Educational Role in East-West Cultural Exchange.

AVAILABLE ONLINE | FREE ACCESS | FURTHER DETAILS
AT WWW.CULTURALHERITAGE.MO/EN/PLANS



Sports

LACE UP, GO!

The 2026 Sands China Macao International 10K promises a fun race for all levels. Organised by the Sports Bureau, Sands China Ltd. and the General Association of Athletics of Macau, the event features two distances – a 10-kilometre race and a Fun Run of approximately 5.5 kilometres – and is expected to attract around 10,000 participants. Competitors in the 10-kilometre race will set off from Sai Van Lake Square before following a scenic route across Sai Van Bridge and Cotai, finishing at the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium.

MARCH 15 | 7AM | REGISTRATION FROM 50 PATACAS |
FURTHER DETAILS AT WWW.MACAO10K.COM



Conference

THE FUTURE IS GREEN

Each year, the Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF) brings together leading voices in sustainability, policy and industry. Launched in 2008 and hosted by the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government, it showcases the latest advances in environmental protection alongside a full programme of international forums, exhibitions, business-matching sessions and exchange activities. The event also welcomes the public on its final day, giving visitors the opportunity to explore emerging green technologies, trends and products.

MARCH 26 TO 28 | FULL DAY | COTAI EXPO AT THE VENETIAN MACAO | FIRST TWO DAYS OPEN ONLY TO TRADE & PROFESSIONALS; LAST DAY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Music

HONOURING A TITAN

Peng Xiuwen (1931–1996) stands as a towering figure in the evolution of Chinese music. Over a lifetime devoted to artistic development, he adapted and composed more than 400 works, helping to lay the foundations of the modern Chinese orchestra. To mark the 95th anniversary of his birth, the Macao Chinese Orchestra is hosting “The Titan”, a tribute concert whose programme brings together some of Mr Peng’s landmark works, including his celebrated adaptation of Mussorgsky’s “Pictures at an Exhibition” and the sweeping fantasia “Terracotta Warriors of Qin”.

MARCH 21 | 8PM | MACAO CULTURAL CENTRE – GRAND AUDITORIUM | FROM 120 PATACAS



Exhibition

HAWKER PAST AND PRESENT

Co-organised by the Municipal Affairs Bureau and the Associação de Auxílio Mútuo de Vendilhões de Macau, Macao Nostalgia: “Imprints on Street Corners” Historical Exhibition of Hawkers is the city’s first large-scale exhibition devoted to these street vendors. Through a combination of images and text, it traces the sector’s gradual evolution, from its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s to today’s more orderly and regulated management. The exhibition features specially produced video interviews with hawkers and a series of photo installations that recreate the look of old-style hawker stalls.

NOW THROUGH MARCH 1 | 9AM TO 9PM | MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS BUREAU GALLERY | FREE ADMISSION





CHINESE ZODIAC

Revolving around 12-year cycles, the Chinese zodiac is based on the lunar calendar with each year represented by an animal. It is a system shaped by ancient folklore, early astronomy and traditional methods of timekeeping. On February 17, we will usher in the Year of the Horse – a time of movement, adventure and freedom.

There are several legends that explain the sequence of the 12 animals for the zodiac. The most famous among them is the myth of the

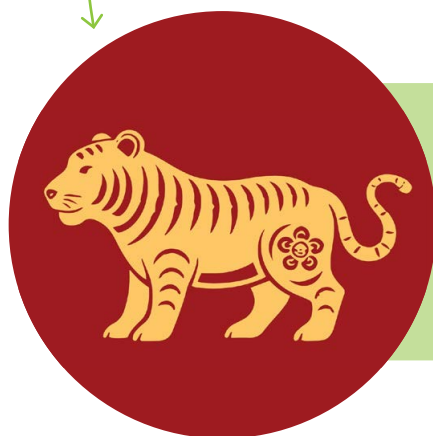
“Great Race”, where the Jade Emperor invited animals to compete in a race across a river. The first 12 animals to reach the other side of the river would be honoured with a place in the zodiac, ranked in the order of arrival. The Rat, quick-witted and resourceful, hitched a ride on the Ox’s back and made a last-minute jump on the shore to secure first place. At the other end of the procession, the Pig arrived last, having paused along the way to eat and take a nap.

Can you find the names of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac?

RAT
OX
TIGER
RABBIT
DRAGON
SNAKE
HORSE
GOAT
MONKEY
ROOSTER
DOG
PIG

(Words can go in any direction)

R	Q	O	G	H	T	P	V	S	D	B	V	W	R	L
G	T	B	O	P	D	A	E	X	K	R	S	M	E	L
Q	U	R	A	H	F	E	R	P	U	T	A	D	T	S
Y	S	O	V	D	R	R	A	B	B	I	T	G	S	Q
E	E	I	W	E	C	K	Y	T	Z	Q	D	C	O	E
W	V	K	G	D	C	S	M	M	G	T	S	O	O	N
V	H	I	N	T	S	Z	Z	Q	M	O	K	Q	R	G
M	T	C	O	O	S	Z	G	D	X	W	Y	V	N	N
O	P	U	J	Z	M	O	D	O	J	X	B	U	B	U
O	X	H	V	Y	D	S	N	U	P	R	G	C	P	A
A	O	P	L	S	H	F	Z	H	H	V	G	K	K	S
T	A	O	G	V	Q	Y	Q	U	A	J	T	E	T	N
G	T	F	L	A	K	W	N	Z	D	F	Z	N	A	A
F	H	P	S	P	I	G	T	C	T	Q	G	K	Y	K
U	J	P	W	N	B	Y	P	T	T	O	A	D	C	E



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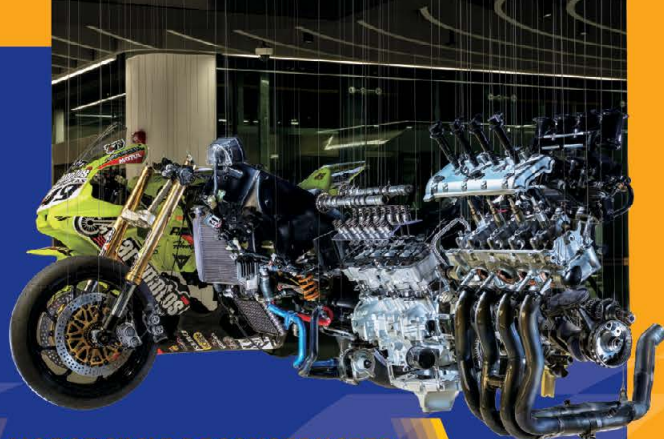
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