

# Macao 澳門



## HOMEGROWN LEADERS

Local talents take the helm of Macao's hospitality sector, steering the industry into a new era of growth





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# THE RISE OF LOCAL HOSPITALITY LEADERS

Homegrown professionals are increasingly stepping into leadership roles across Macao's integrated resorts. Their rise reflects not only personal achievement, but also the city's broader ambition to nurture talent and reinforce its position as a world centre of tourism and leisure [PAGE 6](#)

## Advancing Macao's European connections

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai's first official overseas visit reinforced Macao's role as a bridge between China and Europe, with a particular focus on strengthening ties with Portugal and Spain [PAGE 28](#)



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## Chan Hin Io: chronicler of continuity and change

Photographer Chan Hin Io has documented Macao's transformation since 1999, establishing himself as a key chronicler of the city's evolving urban landscape and enduring spirit **PAGE 68**

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## Strokes, drumbeats and a boat in perfect harmony

The rhythmic beat of drums will once again fill Nam Van Lake as Macao's dragon boat tradition returns, celebrating teamwork, endurance and cultural heritage **PAGE 78**

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Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, a garden of knowledge  
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Alice Kok and the inner life of creativity  
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## Government launches consultation for Third Five-Year Plan

The Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government has launched a 40-day public consultation on its proposed “Third Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the MSAR (2026–2030)”, setting out a blueprint for the city’s economic and social priorities during the period.

Running until June 28, the consultation seeks public feedback on a draft plan designed to align the city more closely with the country’s broader 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, which also covers the period from 2026 to 2030. According to government representatives, the consultation document – available in Chinese and Portuguese – was



prepared following a review of the implementation of Macao’s Second Five-Year Plan, which concluded last year, alongside extensive research and policy analysis.

The draft outlines several priorities, including safeguarding national security and social stability, improving governance efficiency, promoting appropriate economic

diversification, and advancing the high-quality development of the Guangdong–Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

One of the plan’s objectives is to increase the contribution of non-gaming industries to Macao’s economy, with the added value of those sectors projected to account for around 60 percent of the city’s total by 2030, up from 56.7 percent in 2024. ■

## Macao Pavilion at Canton Fair supports 400-plus business matching sessions

The Macao Pavilion at the 139<sup>th</sup> China Import and Export Fair – better known as the Canton Fair – facilitated more than 400 business matching sessions over five days, according to the Macao Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). The event, which concluded on

May 5, was held in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

IPIM oversaw the establishment of the 180-square-metre Macao Pavilion, which showcased more than 200 signature products from Macao alongside goods from Portuguese-speaking countries. The pavilion also

served as a platform to promote Macao’s business environment, investment opportunities and support services.

This year’s pavilion featured 19 Macao enterprises, with around half taking part in the Canton Fair for the first time in the past five years. Sixteen of the participating companies represented “Made in Macao” brands, while the remaining exhibitors acted as agents for products from Portuguese-speaking countries. ■

## MSAR launches temporary fuel subsidies

The Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government has introduced a series of temporary subsidy schemes aimed at easing short-term economic pressures caused by rising fuel prices and shielding residents from the knock-on effects of higher global oil prices.

The measure comes amid heightened geopolitical instability, which has fuelled persistent volatility in international energy markets.

Under one of the schemes, industrial and commercial diesel users in Macao are eligible to receive a subsidy

of 3.3 patacas per litre until July 10 inclusive. The subsidy is deducted directly at the point of purchase.

Officials said the scheme is intended to reduce operating costs for diesel-dependent businesses while preventing higher fuel prices from being passed on to consumers.

Until July 25 inclusive, consumers are also entitled to receive a subsidy of 2.55 patacas per kilogram of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and 1.5 patacas per litre of petrol. These subsidies are also deducted directly at the point of purchase.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### 248,000 arrivals

New all-time high for single-day visitor arrivals in Macao, recorded on May 2 during the 2026 Labour Day holiday period

### 24.43 billion patacas

Total non-gaming visitor spending in Macao in the first quarter of 2026, marking a 24.5 percent year-on-year increase

SOURCE: MACTO, OSSC

## VENICE BIENNALE NEW ART INSPIRED BY OLD ROOTS

"Jacone's Polyphony", Macao's contribution to this year's Venice Biennale – one of the world's most prestigious arts festivals – was inaugurated on May 8 and will remain on display at the Biennale until November 22. Curated by Feng Yan and Cindy Ng Sio Ieng and featuring works created by Macao-based artists Eric Fok Hoi Seng, O Chi Wai and Veronica Lei Fong Ieng, the exhibition draws inspiration from the life and writings of Wu Li (1632–1718), who was also known by the name "Jacone". A prominent Chinese landscape painter, calligrapher, poet and Catholic Jesuit priest during the Qing Dynasty, he studied theology in Macao.



© HANDOUT BY CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUREAU

# RISING THROUGH THE RANKS

Text **Tiago Azevedo**



In Macao's thriving tourism resorts, a **new generation of locally trained professionals** is stepping into managerial roles, reshaping an industry once reliant on imported expertise. Their rise is the result of a coordinated policy framework where government strategy, industry collaboration, and education institutions work together to cultivate high-quality talent for long-term leadership roles



**M**acao's hospitality industry was once defined by international expertise. As the city transformed itself into one of the world's leading tourism and leisure destinations, operators relied on overseas expertise, importing management systems, operational know-how, and senior executives, a step seen as essential to building a modern hospitality industry at unprecedented speed.

But over the past 20 years, another transformation has quietly reshaped the industry from within, as Macao's hospitality sector is increasingly being led by homegrown professionals, from local executives to managers who have risen through the ranks. Their emergence reflects not only the maturation of the industry, but also Macao's broader ambitions to diversify its economy and become a world centre of tourism and leisure.

The share of residents in intermediate or senior management positions at the city's six integrated tourism and leisure enterprises stood at 89.8 percent as of May 2025, according to the most recent figures cited by the head of Macao's Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) in reply to questions from members of the Legislative Assembly. The figure consistently exceeds the minimum 85-percent threshold mandated by the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government for local employees in top-tier executive roles in the sector.

According to Paulo Cheong, senior vice president of human resources at Macao concessionaire Sands China Ltd, the leadership profile of the city's hospitality industry has changed dramatically. "Over the past two decades, Macao's hospitality and leisure industry has moved from rapid expansion into a new phase of high-quality development," he noted. This shift, he added, has brought about a "locally rooted leadership landscape that is globally competitive and closely aligned with national development priorities".

Mr Cheong graduated from the Macao University of Tourism and joined Sands China in 2006, serving a variety of roles in finance,

project development, and ultimately human resources, where he was promoted to senior vice president in early 2024. "Timing played an important role. I entered the industry when Macao's integrated resort sector was expanding rapidly, which created opportunities to grow alongside it," Mr Cheong recalled.

"What made the biggest difference, however, was exposure," he said in an interview with Macao Magazine. Working within large-scale operations and learning from international leaders "helped me build both operational depth and a broader business perspective," he added.

"Engaging with leading enterprises in the [Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao] Greater Bay Area and taking part in industry platforms helped me understand how Macao fits into a wider ecosystem, particularly as integration with the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone [in Hengqin] continues to deepen."

### **Policy-driven effort**

The shift did not happen by chance. It is the result of a long-term policy framework combining government regulation, private-sector cooperation, and investment in education and training.

At the heart of this transformation are coordinated efforts by bodies such as the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and DSAL, working closely with industry stakeholders to create structured, upward career mobility for local residents.

Macao's policy approach to talent development is anchored in the MSAR Government's broader development blueprint,

# 179

Number of courses organised by DSAL in 2025 related to the integrated tourism and leisure sector

including its “1+4” economic diversification strategy. The “1+4” framework 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. These sectors require capable local leaders who understand both

global standards and local context.

Within this framework, MGTO has adopted what it describes as a “multi-pronged approach” to support career advancement, which includes “free professional training programmes, participation in high-level international forums and events,” and other initiatives such as the “CreatorWeek Macao Ambassador Programme”.

“By providing both technical skills and exposure to global best practices, MGTO helps create a pipeline of locally



DSAL regularly organises job fairs in coordination with the city’s integrated tourism and leisure enterprises

trained professionals ready to step into leadership roles,” the office said in a reply to Macao Magazine.

Since 2013, MGTO’s training programmes have steadily evolved beyond entry-level competencies.

Today’s curriculum spans international certifications, crisis management, digital technologies, and advanced managerial skills such as emotional intelligence, negotiation, and cross-cultural communication. These programmes are designed to “prepare participants for supervisory and managerial roles,” it added.

MGTO also said it works closely with industry stakeholders “by aligning training content with the actual needs” identified by integrated resorts, hotels, tourism operators, and industry associations. “The training strategy is informed by the Macao Tourism Industry Development Master Plan, tourism

trends, and direct feedback from both employers and course participants,” it noted.

Mr Cheong recalled how the demands placed on managers have evolved over the years. Today, he said, executives “need to think more broadly, connecting tourism with areas such as MICE, culture, entertainment, Big Health and technology under the ‘Tourism+’ approach, while supporting Macao’s wider role in the Greater Bay Area”.

He added: “In an integrated resort environment, leadership also means bringing complex operations together, improving the guest experience, and leading diverse teams with purpose. It also means seeing digitalisation and AI [artificial intelligence] as essential professional literacy, and using them to support service quality, efficiency and business growth.”

At Sands China, since 2004, “the proportion of local management has grown from around



➤ The front desk is one of the most common starting points in the hospitality industry



## *At our scale, developing local leaders requires a structured pipeline*

**Paulo Cheong**  
Senior vice president of human resources at Sands China

20 percent to approximately 90 percent currently,” Mr Cheong stated. “This has been supported by a structured leadership pipeline – from foundational managerial training, to mid-management elite programmes, and through to advanced leadership initiatives.”

Over the years, Macao’s hospitality industry has also expanded the development opportunities and how they are offered. In the case of Sands China, “programmes now include diverse formats such as cross-functional exposure, regional outreach and industry exchange, forming a more dynamic and practical development model,” Mr Cheong highlighted. “Initiatives like our Youth Talent Development System further

strengthen the long-term young talent pipeline, ensuring a continuous progression from ‘talent’ to ‘leaders’,” he added.

### **Structuring upward mobility**

Complementing the MSAR Government’s sector-wide initiatives is DSAL’s targeted workforce development strategy, most notably the “Employment + Training” Special Scheme. The programme exemplifies the local authorities’ emphasis on creating visible, structured career pathways within the industry.

The scheme adopts an “employment first, training later” approach, “providing residents with career development opportunities characterised by ‘visible career pathways’, ‘transparent training content’, and ‘clear remuneration packages’,” the bureau said in a reply to Macao Magazine.

Participants are hired into positions and then guided through staged training programmes developed jointly by DSAL and integrated tourism and leisure enterprises. These programmes combine technical skills, managerial competencies, language training, and internationally recognised certifications. The programme “aims to encourage residents to join service roles within the integrated tourism and leisure industry, while supporting local employees in embarking on new career development journeys,” DSAL stated. “This facilitates upward mobility for residents and supports their long-term development within relevant sectors.”

## Developing future decision-makers

Macao's newest cohort of tourism and hospitality graduates is entering an industry that increasingly resembles a corporate career ladder rather than a traditional service track, with faster advancement available to those who combine the right skills with strong support systems, according to Glenn McCartney, associate professor of integrated resort and tourism management at the University of Macau.

As integrated resorts have transformed Macao's tourism landscape over the past two decades, hospitality curricula have expanded beyond service fundamentals to include technology, commercial knowledge and operational expertise.

"If you're talking about integrated resorts, there's such a broad scope of knowledge and skill needs," Prof. McCartney said. "But when you come to the core of what we do, we are a service industry."

"Guests are all looking for a quality experience," he noted. "So the fundamentals are service delivery and meeting guests' expectations. That's the basics, and everything else builds on top of it."

With the MSAR Government encouraging greater local representation in mid- to senior-management roles across the city's six integrated tourism and leisure enterprises, the UM scholar said hospitality education

has increasingly shifted towards developing future decision-makers rather than focusing primarily on front-line training.

"The fundamentals of service are still there, but as more locals move into management and executive positions, you need a different set of skills: leadership, strategic decision-making, trend analysis and the ability to deliver on KPIs [key performance indicators], budgets, sales and revenues," he stated.

Drawing on more than two decades of teaching hospitality and tourism in Macao, Prof. McCartney noted that the city's education pipeline has broadened significantly, with local institutions now offering undergraduate, master's and doctoral programmes that are increasingly aligned with industry needs.

Undergraduate students typically begin with business fundamentals such as economics, quantitative methods and communications before specialising in fields including events and conventions, food and beverage, retail, marketing and gaming. Postgraduate programmes, meanwhile, tend to be more research-driven, with a stronger focus on data analysis and industry problem-solving.

Prof. McCartney also highlighted the growing ties between academia and industry, particularly through mentorship initiatives designed to prepare students for employment.

"Mentorship is also very important," he said. "We have recently started a mentorship-like programme that links students with industry executives to give them guidance and support before graduation. It can help them when they enter the industry and possibly progress faster once they begin their careers."

Career progression, however, can vary significantly in the early stages.

"It's not just about skills and knowledge set; it's also about attitude, self-motivation and your own driving force," the scholar suggested, noting that some graduates advance more quickly because of personal initiative and other individual traits.

He added that operators are increasingly investing in internal executive training programmes – sometimes in partnership with universities – to develop, retain and fast-track high-potential employees.

For enterprises, identifying the right fit early can be just as important as formal training, he said, encouraging integrated resorts to rotate young recruits across departments to identify where they perform best.

"Some are really made for marketing. Some are made for event and entertainment management. Some are made for the front office. Others are better suited to back-of-house roles," he said.



© COURTESY OF SANDS CHINA

Students at Sands China's Stage Technology and Event Production Course

The results are tangible. From 2023 to March 2026, 72 special schemes have been launched, providing “more than 1,000 participants” with employment and promotion opportunities. These cover areas such as hotel services, catering, security, integrated entertainment, mechanical and electrical engineering, digital and information technology, and business analysis, “offering diverse job options for residents with varying educational backgrounds,” the bureau noted.

DSAL also said it actively monitors the proportion of local employees in management positions within the city's six integrated tourism and leisure enterprises, to ensure it is maintained at above 85 percent. At the same time, policies governing non-local labour ensure that qualified local

candidates are prioritised, reinforcing opportunities for homegrown talent.

### **Public-private collaboration**

Central to Macao's approach is close collaboration between government bodies and private sector operators. Training content across both MGTO and DSAL programmes is not developed in isolation; it is informed by real industry needs, with input from integrated resorts, hotels, and tourism operators.

This alignment ensures that training translates directly into career advancement. Industry partners provide on-the-job training, mentorship, and promotion pathways, while government agencies supply the policy framework, resources, and quality assurance. The result is described as a seamless ecosystem

in which education, employment, and advancement are tightly interconnected.

In addition, collaboration extends to certification and accreditation. DSAL said it works with professional organisations and regional partners to introduce qualifications recognised locally and internationally, enhancing both employability and career mobility for Macao residents. “This helps Macao residents obtain qualifications in relevant fields and supports the cultivation of skilled personnel required by the industry,” the bureau noted.

In 2025 alone, DSAL organised 179 training courses in the integrated tourism and leisure sector, with over 3,290 participants and more than 1,360 certificates issued. The momentum continued into 2026, with 47 courses attracting over 820 participants, and more than 300 certificates issued in the first quarter.

MGTO’s training ecosystem further reinforces this path, offering flexible learning formats that allow professionals at different career stages to continuously upgrade their skills. This ensures that talent cultivation adapts to industry trends such as

digital transformation and evolving visitor expectations, the tourism office noted.

**Succession planning**

According to Mr Cheong, one of the main challenges for professionals in the industry “is moving from being a strong operator to thinking more broadly as a leader”.

“In an integrated resort environment, this means understanding not only your own function, but also how different parts of the business come together to shape the overall guest experience,” he observed. “Leadership also brings greater accountability and exposure to new challenges, requiring resilience, openness and a commitment to continuous learning.”

As part of his own career path, a “key shift” was to learn how to promote professional advancement in others. “This means identifying potential, developing future leaders and strengthening the succession pipeline,” Mr Cheong stated.

In his view, the localisation effort “has made a meaningful difference” to Sands China’s culture and operations. “Culturally, it has



PHOTO BY MELISSA ROBERTS

➤ Macao’s integrated tourism and leisure enterprises have launched a number of programmes to groom future leaders

strengthened the sense of ownership and connection to the local community,” he noted. “From an operational perspective, decision-making has also evolved. There is now greater emphasis on responsiveness, accountability and cross-functional collaboration, rather than reliance on centralised or imported models.”

From a human resources perspective, “what has proved most effective is moving beyond traditional training and focusing on real experience and responsibility,” Mr Cheong highlighted.

“At our scale, developing local leaders requires a structured pipeline. Programmes such as our Integrated Resort Business Analyst Development Programme, co-organised with DSAL, provide early exposure to data-driven decision-making and cross-sector understanding, both of which are increasingly important,” he said.

The executive added: “Developing local leaders is about combining structured pathways, practical business exposure and the right mindset, so that individuals are supported when they move into more complex roles as Macao’s economy evolves – while building a sustainable and future-ready workforce.”

Local higher education institutions have “played an important role” in strengthening career progression paths, Mr Cheong noted, adding that the partnership is now “evolving into deeper, more strategic collaboration”.

“As Macao deepens its integration with the Greater Bay Area, universities can play an even greater role in linking academic knowledge with real business needs,” he added. “For the industry, this opens the door to closer collaboration between the hospitality sector and universities, not only in Macao but also in the Chinese mainland and around the world. This will be essential to the continued progress of our sector and its future leadership pipeline.”

### **Regional talent hub**

As Macao diversifies its economy and strengthens its position within the Greater

## *Macao is well-positioned to become a regional exporter of hospitality talent, contributing expertise to the Greater Bay Area and beyond*

Macao Government Tourism Office

Bay Area, the implications of its talent strategy extend beyond the city’s boundaries. With a growing pool of highly trained professionals equipped with international certifications and global exposure, Macao is increasingly positioned to become a regional exporter of hospitality talent.

“With strong training infrastructure, partnerships, and institutions like the Macao University of Tourism, Macao is well-positioned to become a regional exporter of hospitality talent, contributing expertise to the Greater Bay Area and beyond,” MGTO said.

“As Macao continues to develop its world-class tourism and hospitality infrastructure, local professionals are gaining increasingly sophisticated skills through MGTO’s training programmes, international forums, and hands-on experience within Macao’s integrated resorts,” the office added.

The tourism authority also said that the city’s unique position as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and its “growing recognition” in areas such as Muslim-friendly tourism offerings “further enhance the value of Macao-trained professionals”.

“While the immediate priority remains strengthening the local workforce, the competencies being developed today position Macao well to become a source of skilled hospitality talent for the wider Asia-Pacific region in the future,” MGTO stated. ■

## Success stories

# Destined for the top

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

**A**s the opening general manager of the Capella at Galaxy Macau hotel, Andy Lio is the embodiment of a homegrown success story. Born, raised and educated in Macao, he has risen through the ranks of the city's hospitality industry to lead one of its most exclusive luxury hotels.

The new facility – under the Singapore-based Capella Hotel Group brand – officially opened in February this year, following a soft launch in May 2025.

Mr Lio's journey began far from the glittering chandeliers of Cotai. As a student at what is now Macao University of Tourism (UTM), he trained at

Pousada de Mong-Há, the university's educational boutique hotel.

With just 20 rooms, the hotel gives undergraduates hands-on experience serving paying guests. At the pousada, he gained experience across the full spectrum of hotel operations, from front-office duties and housekeeping to in-room dining.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in hotel management, Mr Lio embarked on his hospitality career the traditional way. He progressed from front-office agent to supervisor and eventually duty manager at one of the city's integrated resorts. Keen to understand every aspect of hotel operations, he later took on the demanding role of night manager, spending a year working overnight shifts.

Alongside his professional development, he continued his academic studies, earning a master of business administration with a major in finance from the University of Saint Joseph.

In 2010, Mr Lio joined integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd for the launch of the first phase of Galaxy Macau, working at the property's Galaxy Hotel. Over time, he rose from assistant manager – front desk to executive manager – front office before joining the opening team of The Ritz-Carlton, Macau, which formed part of the integrated resort's second phase of development.

## Redefining luxury

After a period working at a hotel complex on the Macao peninsula, his defining opportunity arrived with the launch of Raffles at Galaxy Macau. Joining the opening team in 2019 as assistant vice-

## Macao ID card

### Name

**Andy Lio**

### Age

**39**

### Position

**General manager of  
Capella at Galaxy Macau**

### Motto

**"View your work not as a  
job, but as an opportunity to  
build professional knowledge.  
Work hard, work smart, and  
the rewards will come."**

✔ Andy Lio oversees a 17-storey luxury property, comprising 95 suites and penthouses



president of hotel operations, he later served as acting general manager for more than a year. Under his leadership, the hotel secured a prestigious Forbes Five-Star Award in 2024 during its first full year of operation — an achievement that Mr Lio credits to intensive staff training, rigorous role-playing exercises and an uncompromising commitment to excellence.

“After the successful opening of Raffles, the company presented me with the ultimate opportunity: to open Capella,” he said in an interview with Macao Magazine. “To become a homegrown general manager – 100 percent local, developed right here – is an incredible honour.”

Today, Mr Lio oversees a 17-storey luxury property comprising just 95 suites and penthouses, some featuring private infinity pools, karaoke lounges and in-room gyms. Yet for him, luxury extends far beyond physical amenities.

“True luxury is about anticipating needs, personalising experiences, and blending local culture with world-class standards,” he said.

“Every detail should feel personal, every moment effortless.”

Beyond running one of Macao’s most exclusive hotels, Mr Lio is helping to shape the city’s next generation of hospitality leaders. He regularly returns to UTM as a guest lecturer, sharing practical industry insights with students preparing to enter the profession.

In his view, the defining strength of local hospitality professionals can be summed up in a single word: “multi”. Macao’s multicultural character gives them a distinctive advantage, he argues. Fluent in Cantonese, Mandarin and English, Mr Lio moves effortlessly between international visitors and guests from the Chinese mainland.

Becoming a general manager, he admits, was never a matter of chance.

“My former classmates always remind me of a front-office class we had back at university,” he said with a laugh. “Apparently, I stood up and declared that I was going to become a general manager. It has truly been the dream from day one.” ■

## Success stories

# A trailblazer in hospitality

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

**W**hen Joanne Chan became the first local woman to serve as general manager of Banyan Tree Macau, her appointment represented more than a personal milestone. It marked a significant moment for Macao's hospitality sector, demonstrating that local talent was ready to lead some of the city's most prestigious luxury hotels.

On the heels of her success at Banyan Tree Macau, Ms Chan was recently given the opportunity to take on the role of general manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Macau, a triple Forbes Five-Star property in January 2026. The all-suite hotel features more than 230 luxury accommodations.

## Macao ID card

### Name

**Joanne Chan**

### Age

**38**

### Position

**General manager at  
The Ritz-Carlton, Macau**

### Motto

**"Be the true you."**

Her journey began at Pui Va Middle School, where she first realised that she wanted to pursue a career in hospitality. With the support of her family and a clear sense of purpose, she moved to Switzerland to study at the Swiss Hotel Management School, widely regarded as one of the world's leading hospitality institutions.

Yet it was an internship at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, that provided her first real test. "That was how I started real hospitality," Ms Chan told Macao Magazine. Her days were spent rotating through food and beverage operations, guest check-in services and the demanding routines of housekeeping.

"I still remember it as the most intense period of my life. As a room attendant, I had to clean 17 rooms a day – that's 34 beds. It was a gruelling schedule, to the point where I seriously thought about giving up on the industry entirely. But in the end, I pushed through."

While confronting the realities of frontline hotel operations, Ms Chan also absorbed Disney's renowned philosophy of creating "magical moments" for guests. The experience proved transformative, shaping her understanding of hospitality as a people-centred profession.

"It's all about people and culture," she said. "That is what made me truly fall in love with this profession."

### Macao's first local GM

Upon her return to Macao, Ms Chan joined the front-office team at Grand Hyatt Macau in

✔ In 2022, Joanne Chan became the first Macao resident to be appointed general manager of a local Forbes Five-Star hotel



2010. The following year, she moved to Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd, beginning a career that would take her across five hotel brands within the Galaxy Macao integrated resort. She was part of the pre-opening team at Hotel Okura Macao and later worked in operations at Broadway Macao and the 1,500-room Galaxy Hotel, gaining experience across a broad range of hospitality environments.

Her versatility, coupled with consistent growth culminated in a landmark achievement in 2022, when she became the first local resident to be appointed general manager of a Forbes Five-Star hotel: Banyan Tree Macau.

For Ms Chan, exceptional guest service begins behind the scenes. “In order for us to take care of the guests, I must take care of our team first,” she explained.

That people-first philosophy also shapes her approach to leadership during challenging periods. She believes emotional stability is essential, recognising that a leader’s attitude quickly influences those around them. As a result,

she makes a conscious effort not to project panic or negativity.

“We support each other, we stick together, and we will get through it,” she said.

Beyond managing luxury hotels, Ms Chan is committed to developing the next generation of hospitality professionals. She regularly speaks at universities, encouraging young people to embrace innovation, empowerment and authenticity as they build their careers.

Her message resonates in a city where integrated resorts have become multifaceted lifestyle destinations, offering wellness facilities, Michelin-starred restaurants, family attractions and international entertainment. Ms Chan views that transformation as a major opportunity for talented young, local individuals. As the industry continues to diversify, she believes Macao’s future hospitality leaders can bring fresh ideas, cultural understanding and local perspectives to positions that were once largely occupied by expatriates. ■

## Success stories

# Bridging global experiences with local know-how

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

**M**acao-born Danny Tang exemplifies a new generation of local leaders who share a global vision for the future of Macao's hospitality industry. As vice president and general manager of the Sands Macao hotel complex, he is the first local resident to hold the position at the landmark property that helped usher in the liberalisation of Macao's gaming industry and the hospitality boom that followed.

Mr Tang's path to leadership was shaped by a multilingual and multicultural upbringing. During his childhood, he attended a Portuguese-language school during the day while studying

Chinese in the evenings, developing an adaptability that would later become one of his defining strengths. Today, he is fluent in Portuguese, English and Chinese.

His international journey began in 1992, when he moved to Portugal with his family. He then spent 14 years in the United Kingdom, immersing himself in educational and social environments very different from those he had known in Macao. Later, he continued his studies, earning a master's degree from the University of Iowa's Tippie College of Business.

After several years working overseas, the decision to return to Macao was driven by personal considerations. Although his daughter was born in the United Kingdom, Mr Tang and his wife wanted her to grow up in what they regarded as one of the safest places in the world. Macao's strong sense of community and cultural identity also played an important role in their decision to return in 2008.

Back in Macao, Mr Tang joined the gaming industry, where he gained his first experience in the integrated resort business. In keeping with his adventurous spirit, he later accepted a position in Sydney, Australia, further broadening his international experience.

A new opportunity brought him back to Macao in 2014, this time to join Sands China Ltd. Over the following decade, his career took him through some of the city's best-known integrated resorts, building expertise across multiple facets of the business.

## Macao ID card

### Name

**Danny Tang**

### Age

**In his 40s**

### Position

**Vice president and general manager at Sands Macao**

### Motto

**"Local talent can shine globally."**

✔ At Sands Macao, Danny Tang leads a workforce of approximately 2,500 people



Eventually, Mr Tang came full circle, returning to Sands Macao, where he now leads a workforce of approximately 2,500 people.

### **Trust enables empowerment**

For Mr Tang, leadership is about far more than managing people. It is about creating harmony. He believes his experience navigating different cultures and languages, and connecting with people from diverse backgrounds, has been instrumental not only in leading a multicultural workforce but also in shaping exceptional guest experiences.

In an integrated resort environment, he argues, success depends on bringing together a complex mix of hospitality, entertainment, retail, dining and wellness offerings into a seamless whole. “The whole experience must be tailor-made to be seamless,” he told Macao Magazine.

His leadership philosophy is rooted in a longstanding Chinese maxim: trust people completely if you choose to entrust them with

responsibility; if you do not trust them, do not place them in the role.

At Sands Macao, that principle translates into a strong emphasis on empowerment. “We have enough talented individuals to do the job,” Mr Tang explained. “Clarity of purpose and autonomy are what help teams to truly grow.”

The property’s workforce reflects the international nature of Macao’s hospitality industry, bringing together professionals from Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and the Chinese mainland, among other places. Yet within that diversity, Mr Tang sees particular promise in local talent.

Looking back on the past two decades, he notes that many local professionals have matured alongside the integrated resort sector itself, accumulating deep expertise and leadership experience. Looking ahead, he believes even more will move into senior management positions, helping to shape the future of hospitality in Macao. ■

## Success stories

# Local leader elevates Macao's MICE business

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

**A** Macao native, Oreo Chan grew up captivated by the elegance and sophistication of the city's luxury hotels. Today, he works for one of the first international hotel brands to establish a presence in the city, serving as director of sales, events and MICE at Mandarin Oriental, Macau.

"As a boy, the hotels felt like palaces of order and elegance. I was mesmerised by the bellmen's choreographed movements, the warmth of the staff's smiles, and the sophisticated atmosphere," he recalled in an interview with Macao

Magazine. "It felt like a dream world in the middle of the city."

That childhood fascination ultimately inspired his career path. Determined to turn admiration into expertise, Mr Chan pursued hospitality studies in Switzerland at the HTMi Hotel and Tourism Management Institute.

Returning to Macao in 2009, he began his career in front-office operations at the MGM Macau hotel complex. It was in sales, however, that he discovered his true passion.

Roles at the Grand Lisboa and Four Seasons Hotel Macao properties helped lay the groundwork for the next chapter of his career, on the Chinese mainland. For Mr Chan, relocating to Shanghai proved a defining moment. He joined The Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, Pudong, accepting a significant pay cut in exchange for the opportunity to accelerate his development. The move ultimately led to his promotion to assistant director of business development – MICE.

Shanghai's intense pace and highly competitive market reshaped his approach to leadership and problem-solving. "Clients don't want to hear why something is impossible," he said. "They want to see us overcome obstacles on their behalf."

Three years in Shanghai strengthened his resilience and sharpened his instincts. When he returned to Macao in 2021 to join Mandarin Oriental, Macau as assistant director of event sales, he brought with him not only valuable experience but also a renewed sense of purpose. At the Mandarin Oriental group, he found what

## Macao ID card

### Name

**Oreo Chan**

### Age

**39**

### Position

**Director of sales, events and MICE at Mandarin Oriental, Macau**

### Motto

**"I don't believe in just talking the talk; I believe in walking the talk."**

✔ Oreo Chan spent three years working in Shanghai before returning to Macao to join the Mandarin Oriental group



he describes as his “longest and most fulfilling professional home”.

### **Walk the talk**

In 2024, Mr Chan was promoted to director of sales, events and MICE. For him, the appointment represented more than a personal achievement; it reflected the growing prominence of local talent within Macao’s hospitality sector.

“In the early days, local faces were rarely seen in senior management,” he reflected. “Now, being entrusted with this role at a brand that has been a pillar of Macao for over 40 years is a point of immense pride.”

His leadership philosophy is grounded in example rather than instruction. Whether overseeing complex events or supporting colleagues during demanding periods, he believes leadership begins with visible commitment.

At the same time, Mr Chan sees empowerment as essential to building high-performing teams. “Everyone on the team must be trusted to make decisions on the fly. When the guest departs happy,

the bond forged within the team is unbreakable.”

For those who view Macao’s hospitality industry as overly competitive, Mr Chan offers a different perspective. “Macao has more Forbes Five-Star hotels than London or Paris, world-class Michelin dining, and over 40 million arrivals a year. Yes, it is competitive, but competition is where opportunity lives.”

Looking ahead, Mr Chan believes technology and connectivity will reshape the hospitality industry over the coming decade. Artificial intelligence, he predicts, will become increasingly integrated into the travel experience, helping to create highly personalised itineraries and services. At the same time, improved transport links across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area are expected to make multi-destination travel more seamless than ever before.

For hotel leaders, he argues, the challenge will be balancing rapid adaptation to evolving guest expectations with the service excellence that has underpinned Macao’s reputation as a leading hospitality destination. ■

# UTM: Shaping future hospitality leaders

Text **Cherry Chan**

**A**s a growing number of local executives in Macao's hospitality industry rise through the ranks, many share a common credential: a degree from the Macao University of Tourism (UTM). For three decades, the publicly funded university has focused on developing talent for the culture, tourism and hospitality sectors, and its long-term investment in local human capital is increasingly evident across the city's leadership landscape.

The success is reflected in international rankings. According to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026, UTM is Asia's leading higher education institution for hospitality and leisure management and ranks among the world's top 10 universities in the field. One area in which it has particularly excelled is "employer reputation".

"Evidence shows that a majority of UTM graduates are employed within six months of graduation, with many of them occupying senior positions after accumulating experience," the university's rector, Dr Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan, told Macao Magazine. "UTM plays a pivotal role in supporting Macao's vision to cultivate homegrown industry executives."

The university currently has more than 2,800 students. Employer demand for UTM graduates "remains high," according to Dr Vong.

The scholar says the combination of academic excellence and industry relevance demonstrates that local higher education institutions "can nurture academically competent, work-ready talent to drive the long-term development of Macao's economy".

Over the years, UTM has introduced a range of programmes designed to respond to a rapidly changing industry, including postgraduate and executive development courses aimed at producing professionals capable of assuming leadership positions.

## **Local success, international strategy**

When it was established in 1995 as the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT), the institution offered only higher diploma and bachelor's degree programmes. A significant milestone came in 2019, when it expanded its academic portfolio to include master's and doctoral degrees. Dr Vong describes the move as a turning point in strengthening the pipeline of locally trained professionals equipped for management and executive roles.

More broadly, UTM has reshaped its curriculum from one centred primarily on operational training to an approach focused on developing "strategic, research-informed leaders", Dr Vong said. While operational competencies remain fundamental, programmes now place greater emphasis on governance, innovation and cross-sector strategy.

"Taken together, these changes ensure graduates can not only run day-to-day operations, but also lead organisations and shape the future direction of Macao's culture, tourism and hospitality sectors."

Today, the university offers a diverse portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes beyond tourism education alone. Examples include master's degrees in business administration,

cultural and creative industries management, health services management, and digital marketing and analytics, as well as PhD and Doctor of Business Administration programmes. Courses are available during the day and in the evening, and teaching languages include English and Chinese. Technology-related elements have also been integrated into courses at all levels.

According to Dr Vong, part of UTM's success stems from its "internationalised education strategy". The university operates a number of dual-degree programmes with internationally recognised institutions, including the Swiss Hotel Management School and the University of Queensland, while also running co-branded master's programmes with the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism).

### **Close industry partnerships**

UTM also "sustains close, long-term partnerships with industry stakeholders, ensuring curricula

and graduate capabilities stay fully aligned with evolving market and industry needs", she said. Supported by a network of more than 200 international partners and over 900 internship providers, the university offers extensive practical training opportunities while encouraging international exchanges to broaden the global outlook of students.

Macao's hotels and integrated resorts are central to that network. Dr Vong describes a "structured, multi-touch pipeline" linking the university with major hospitality operators, enabling early talent identification and development.

UTM regularly organises faculty-led visits to local properties, where students meet senior executives and department heads for discussions, case studies and industry insights. These face-to-face engagements help create opportunities for early talent spotting and targeted mentoring. Familiarisation tours, guest lectures, executive



UTM expanded in 2015 to include its current facilities in Taipa

## *UTM plays a pivotal role in supporting Macao's vision to cultivate homegrown industry executives*

**Dr Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan**  
Rector of the Macao University of Tourism



masterclasses, internships and industry placements further support high-potential students.

“In parallel, we collaborate on industry-led activities, where high-calibre students recommended by UTM are tested in high-pressure, practice-based settings and receive feedback from resort executives.”

Another factor behind the university's success is its emphasis on entrepreneurship. That commitment was recognised in 2022 when the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) awarded UTM a PATA Gold Award in the Human Capital Development Initiative category for its decade-long efforts to promote entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality.

UTM graduates are also widely recognised for their communication skills and professional presentation. “UTM builds students' confidence to compete with international candidates by combining globally benchmarked, internationally accredited programmes with deep, on-the-ground engagement in Macao's integrated resort industry,” Dr Vong said.

In 1995, the university opened the Mong-Há campus and by 2015 grew to include its current facilities in Taipa. UTM's next chapter is now taking shape with the development of a campus in the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town. The latter is a new global talent hub that also involves Macao's two other public universities.

Scheduled to open in 2030, UTM's Hengqin extension will strengthen the university's presence in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, where it already oversees a wide network of vocational training centres.

As the university expands both physically and academically, Dr Vong says UTM “will further draw on premium global resources”.

“Moving forward, it will continue to deliver quality, globally competitive education, nurturing high-calibre interdisciplinary professionals tailored to empower Macao and the Greater Bay Area.” ■



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藝博館  
**MAM**

OVERSEAS VISIT

# BRIDGING CLOSER TIES WITH EUROPE

Text **Tiago Azevedo**  
Photos **Government Information Bureau**

Chief Executive **Sam Hou Fai** concluded in April a successful European tour that strengthened cooperation with Portugal, expanded Macao's platform role to Spanish-speaking countries, and advanced engagement with multilateral organisations

**M**acao's long-lasting connection with Europe entered a new chapter this April, as Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai undertook his first official overseas tour. Spanning Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Belgium, the tour was both a reaffirmation of tradition and a forward-looking exercise in strategic positioning for the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

Mr Sam said the extensive itinerary yielded fruitful results and achieved its intended goals, with the outcomes focused

on deepening cooperation with Portugal, extending Macao's platform role to Spanish-speaking countries, and strengthening engagement with the European Union (EU).

During the tour, 46 activities of various kinds were held, including high-level meetings, events showcasing the achievements of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, economic and trade promotions, tourism promotions, and cultural and educational exchanges. At governmental and enterprise levels, more than 100 cooperation agreements were signed,



▲ The Chief Executive shakes hands with the President of the Portuguese Republic, António José Seguro

with consensus reached on areas for further cooperation and on additional projects.

Positive results were also achieved in promoting the development opportunities available in Macao and Hengqin, strengthening external exchanges and cooperation, realising the innovative “shared voyage” model, and assisting Chinese-mainland and Macao enterprises in jointly exploring Portuguese-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and continental European markets. It also comprehensively elevated mutual trust and the level of cooperation between the relevant countries, assisting in China’s high-level opening-up strategy.

The MSAR Government delegation

was accompanied by a 120-strong entrepreneur delegation in Lisbon, Portugal, and Madrid, Spain.

The visits to Portugal and Spain further consolidated Macao’s role as a “precise connector”, helping to strengthen cooperative relations between China, Portuguese-speaking countries, Spanish-speaking countries, and the EU, Mr Sam noted.

### **High-level cooperation**

Portugal was the first stop of the visit and a central focus of the tour. In Lisbon, the Chief Executive met with seven leaders or senior officials, including with the President of the Portuguese Republic, António José Seguro,

## Positioning Macao on the multilateral stage

During the European tour, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai placed strong emphasis on deepening engagement with key multilateral organisations, reinforcing Macao's role as an outward-looking and globally connected city.

In Geneva, Mr Sam met with Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, where discussions focused on Macao's continued participation in the multilateral trading system. As a founding member of the WTO under the designation "Macao, China", the city has long contributed to global trade dialogue and policy development.

The Chief Executive reaffirmed Macao's commitment to supporting WTO initiatives, particularly those benefiting small economies. He highlighted the city's unique role as a platform linking China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and its potential to further facilitate trade exchanges within the WTO framework.

During the meeting, Ms Okonjo-Iweala expressed her hope that Macao and the WTO will continue to work together to advance various initiatives that are meant to benefit multilateral trade.

Both sides also exchanged views on strengthening cooperation in areas such as investment facilitation and capacity-building, with Macao offering its experience as a small but highly open economy. The Macao Economic and Trade Office to the WTO, based in Geneva, has maintained close working contact with the WTO Secretariat, Mr Sam noted.

Complementing this engagement, Mr Sam also met with the representative of China's Permanent Mission to the WTO, ambassador Li Yongjie, underscoring the importance of coordinated efforts in advancing Macao's participation in global trade governance. The visit to Geneva – a major hub for multilateral cooperation – also featured a meeting with the permanent representative of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland, ambassador Jia Guide.

Earlier on in the tour, in Madrid, the Chief Executive had a meeting with United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) Secretary-General, Shaikha Al Nuwais. Tourism remains a cornerstone of Macao's economy, and the meeting centred

on strengthening collaboration in tourism promotion, talent development, and sustainable growth.

Mr Sam noted the long-standing partnership between Macao and UN Tourism, which has been reinforced through successive cooperation agreements. In late March 2026, the two sides revised an existing memorandum of understanding, extending its validity until December 31, 2028.

The Chief Executive expressed a desire to expand joint initiatives, particularly in tourism education and professional training, leveraging Macao's institutions and international networks.

Ms Al Nuwais, in turn, recognised Macao's strengths as a global tourism hub and praised its contributions to international platforms such as the Global Tourism Economy Forum. She highlighted opportunities for deeper collaboration, particularly in raising global standards in tourism education and promoting sustainable industry practices.

The secretary-general also highlighted Macao's rich resources in tourism education, which have supported successful collaboration between UN Tourism and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM).



Sam Hou Fai meets with the director-general of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala



The Chief Executive with the Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Shaikha Al Nuwais

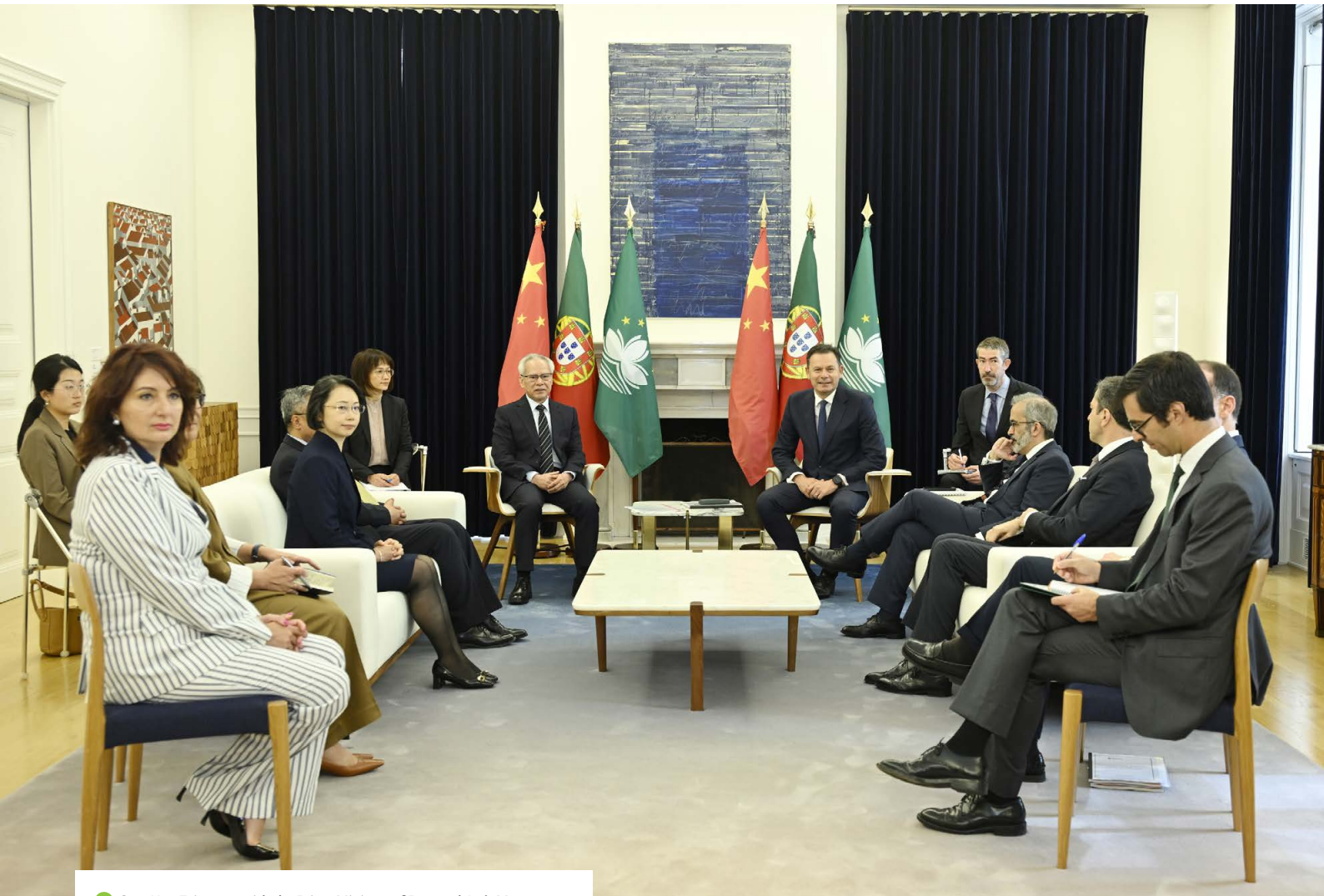
and Prime Minister Luís Montenegro, holding separate discussions on advancing bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.

Mr Sam emphasised Macao's commitment to elevating cooperation across multiple domains, from trade and investment to education, culture and innovation. Anchored in its positioning as "One Centre, One Platform, One Base", Macao will continue to expand its external engagement, particularly deepening and broadening practical cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries, he added.

The Chief Executive also highlighted that

the MSAR Government has "consistently and vigorously" promoted the use of Portuguese and supported Portuguese-language education in Macao. The number of people studying Portuguese in Macao is currently the highest since the city's return to the motherland, he stressed.

Mr Sam added that high-quality talent is essential for Macao's future development. Under the current MSAR talent-attraction scheme, proficiency in Portuguese is considered an advantage, further demonstrating the Government's strong



Sam Hou Fai meets with the Prime Minister of Portugal, Luís Montenegro

commitment to the Portuguese language.

In the meeting with Prime Minister Montenegro, the Chief Executive said the MSAR Government welcomes Portuguese companies to expand their operations in Macao; and, through Macao's platform link, actively participate in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and access the Chinese mainland market, he added.

Mr Montenegro stated that Portugal is committed to deepening friendly and cooperative ties with China, emphasising that Macao serves as an important gateway for Portuguese businesses to enter the Chinese market, while Portugal can likewise serve as a platform for Chinese-mainland and Macao enterprises seeking access to the European market.

Regarding other areas of cooperation, the Prime Minister noted that Portugal would

further deepen exchanges and collaboration with Macao in judicial cooperation, cultural and tourism development, Portuguese language promotion, and high-level talent development, aiming for mutual growth and shared benefits.

In Portugal, Mr Sam also met with the President of the Portuguese Parliament, José Pedro Aguiar-Branco; the Minister of Justice, Rita Alarcão Júdice; the Minister of Economy and of Territorial Cohesion, Manuel Castro Almeida; the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel; and the President of Portugal's Supreme Court of Justice, João Cura Mariano.

The Macao and Portuguese representatives engaged in comprehensive and in-depth exchanges, continuing the traditional friendship between Macao and Portugal and elevating exchanges and cooperation. Portugal reaffirmed its support for Macao's development and internationalisation, while



▲ The Chief Executive meets with the Second Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Work and Social Economy, Yolanda Díaz Pérez

## Connecting with talent and trade



The Chief Executive meets with Macao students (above) in Lisbon, and visits the Association of Chinese Enterprises in Portugal (below)

During the stay in Lisbon, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai engaged with both Macao students and business leaders, underscoring the city's enduring ties with Portugal and its strategic global role.

At a gathering with around 110 Macao students studying across Portugal, Mr Sam delivered a message that blended encouragement with expectation. He reaffirmed the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government's continued support for students abroad, while urging them to return home after their studies to contribute to national and regional development. He highlighted that bilingual and bicultural talent who have a global perspective are essential to Macao's role as a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Drawing from his own experience studying in Portugal, Mr Sam encouraged the Macao students to strengthen their academic foundations and broaden their global outlook.

The Chief Executive also said he was pleased to see many students expressing interest in taking part in the development of the Guangdong-

Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. He highlighted that the MSAR Government has introduced a series of supportive policies and measures for Macao's young people to integrate into national development.

The MSAR Government will continue to create better conditions in the future, actively supporting students to build their careers in the Greater Bay Area and the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, in order fully to utilise their talents across various fields, he added.

Separately, at the Association of Chinese Enterprises in Portugal, Mr Sam met with representatives

from both mainland Chinese and Macao businesses operating locally. Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration and leveraging Macao's platform to expand overseas opportunities.

The Chief Executive commended these enterprises for their contributions to Portugal's socio-economic development and for playing a "significant role" in promoting China-Portugal economic and trade cooperation.

The delegation included representatives of enterprises from Macao, Hengqin, and other places on the Chinese mainland, for the Portugal and Spain leg of the tour, under a "joint voyage" model, Mr Sam noted. The model aimed to better leverage Macao's unique platform role in supporting both Chinese mainland and Macao enterprises in expanding overseas.

The head of the MSAR Government also encouraged Macao companies in Portugal to strengthen collaboration with the Association, in a bid to effectively integrate into and serve China's development agenda.





📍 A reception in the Spanish capital, Madrid, hosted by the MSAR Government

recognising the city’s unique position under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework.

During the Lisbon visit, the Chief Executive also met with the Chinese Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic, Yang Yirui.

### **Spanish reach**

During the Madrid leg of the tour, the Chief Executive articulated a key strategic direction: extending Macao’s platform role from Portuguese-speaking countries to Spanish-speaking countries. The initiative includes promoting trade and investment through institutional mechanisms and a dedicated development fund supporting cooperation with Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking markets.

Strengthening cooperation with Spanish-speaking countries is part of the MSAR Government’s “strategic development effort,” Mr Sam stated. As such, the Macao authorities will also open up market opportunities and increasing trade with Spanish-speaking countries, including in Latin America, with the help of a one-billion yuan development fund – for promoting trade between China and Portuguese (Spanish)-speaking countries – jointly established by the MSAR Government and the Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macao

### **Intensive Cooperation Zone In Hengqin.**

The visit to Spain was marked by active engagement with government officials and business communities. Economic complementarities, including advanced manufacturing, green finance and renewable energy, were identified as areas of strong potential.

At the same time, cultural and tourism cooperation emerged as a defining theme. Both Macao and Spain share rich cultural heritage and global tourism appeal, offering fertile ground for collaboration in high-quality tourism development.

Both sides agreed to launch joint promotion campaigns to attract more Spanish and international tourists to experience Macao’s unique blend of Chinese and Western cultures, Mr Sam noted.

The Chief Executive also said the Macao-Hengqin area serves as a gateway for Spanish enterprises to enter the Chinese mainland market, while Spain likewise is a bridge for Chinese mainland and Macao firms to access Spanish-speaking markets. Both sides, he added, agreed to establish a regular business-matching mechanism, to facilitate mutual investment and jointly tap into the vast market of the Spanish-speaking world.

A total of 48 cooperation agreements was signed in Madrid, covering high technology, overseas expansion of exhibition brands, and sports events. Approximately 200 guests attended a Macao-Spain business cooperation seminar, with many Spanish firms expressing strong interest in collaboration with the other side.

While in Spain, Mr Sam met with the Second Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Work and Social Economy, Yolanda Díaz Pérez; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, José Manuel Albares Bueno; and the Second Vice President of the Senate of Spain, Concha Andreu Rodríguez. The Chief Executive also held a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Spain and Andorra, Yao Jing.

### Linking with Europe

The final stage of the tour took the Chief Executive to Brussels, the administrative heart of the EU. Meetings with EU officials, including with Vice-President of the European Parliament, Younous Omarjee, and Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the EU's European External Action Service, Olof Skoog, highlighted the depth of Macao-EU relations and the potential for further cooperation.

The partnership has matured into a close trade and investment relationship. The Chief Executive said the MSAR Government particularly hopes to strengthen alignment with the EU in fields such as innovation and technology development, green industries, and industry-academia-research collaboration.

Macao's positioning as "One Centre, One Platform, One Base" aligns naturally with these areas, offering opportunities for collaboration that go beyond traditional trade, he added.

Mr Omarjee said he hoped that China-EU



Sam Hou Fai with Younous Omarjee, Vice-President of the European Parliament

relations could be further developed through the Macao platform. The representative suggested that Macao could make use of its unique cultural characteristics to promote in-depth exchanges with European countries in the fields of culture and the arts, thus, jointly creating more compelling cultural and artistic offerings to further enhance Macao's tourism competitiveness.

On his turn, Mr Skoog emphasised that the EU fully agrees it can expand cooperation with Macao in areas such as innovative technology, green technology, higher education, and cultural and tourism industries.

The Brussels leg of the journey included a meeting with Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Agriculture, David Clarinval. The two sides discussed topics such as cooperation in logistics, aviation, and biomedicine. The Chief Executive also met with the Chinese Ambassador to Belgium, Fei Shengchao.

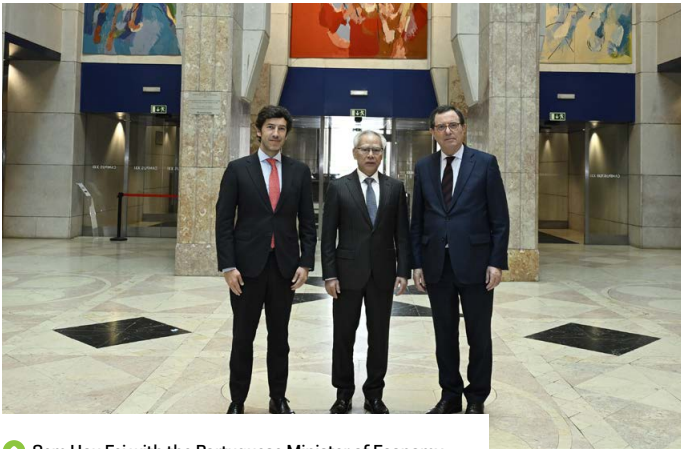
Following the European tour, Mr Sam said the MSAR Government will effectively play its unique role as a "precise connector", continuously engage in external exchanges and cooperation, inject new momentum into Macao's efforts toward appropriate economic diversification and contribute to the nation's high-level opening-up. ■



Sam Hou Fai with the President of the Portuguese Parliament, José Pedro Aguiar-Branco



The Chief Executive meets with the Portuguese Minister of Justice, Rita Alarcão Júdice



Sam Hou Fai with the Portuguese Minister of Economy and of Territorial Cohesion, Manuel Castro Almeida (right)



The Chief Executive meets with the Portuguese Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel



The Chief Executive with the President of Portugal's Supreme Court of Justice, João Cura Mariano



The Chief Executive shakes hands with the Chinese Ambassador to Portugal, Yang Yirui



Reception hosted by the MSAR Government in Lisbon



A total of 18 cooperation agreements was signed at a reception in Lisbon



Inauguration of the exhibition "Reflections of a Sea of Mirrors: 500 Years of Exchanges between Chinese and Western Civilisations in Macao"



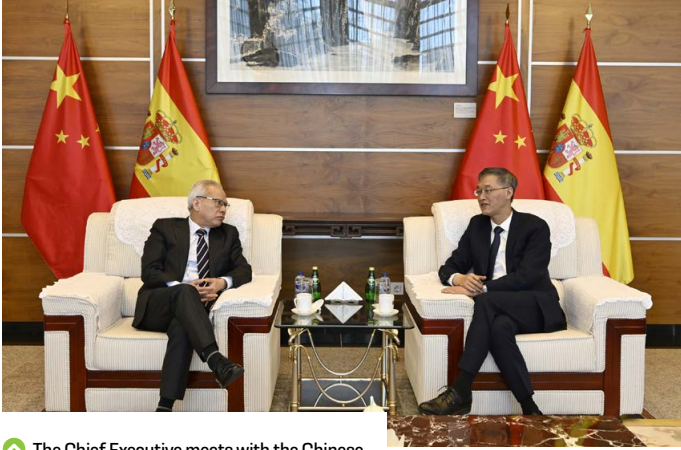
Opening of the "Macao's Successful Practice of 'One Country, Two Systems'" exhibition in Lisbon



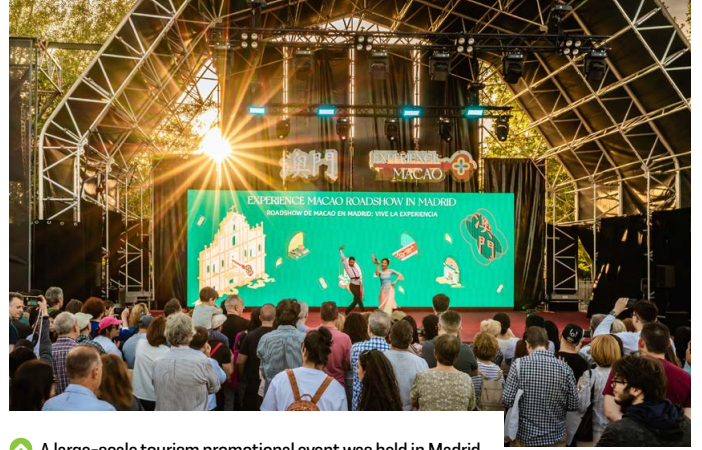
The Chief Executive with the Second Vice President of the Senate of Spain, Concha Andreu Rodríguez



Sam Hou Fai meets with Spain's Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, José Manuel Albares Bueno



⬆ The Chief Executive meets with the Chinese Ambassador to Spain and Andorra, Yao Jing



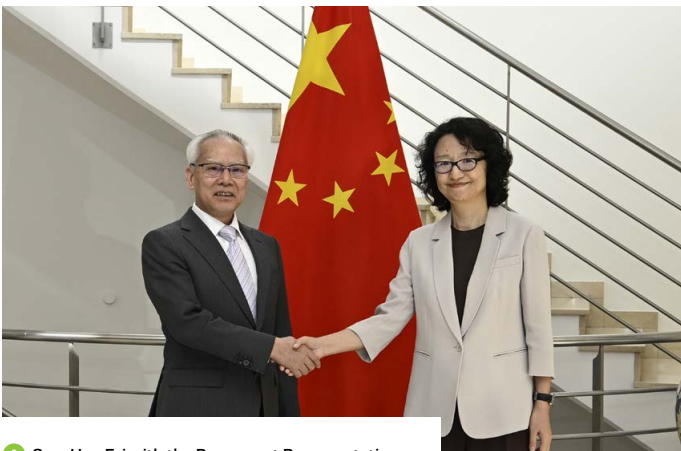
⬆ A large-scale tourism promotional event was held in Madrid



⬆ Business-matching sessions arranged at the "Macao-Spain Economic and Commercial Co-operation Promotion Seminar"



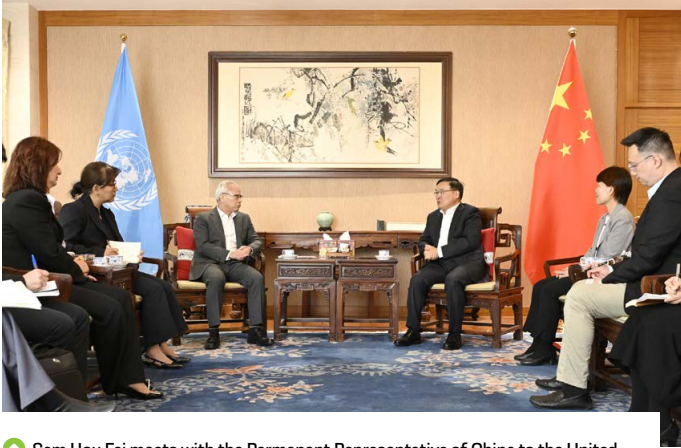
⬆ Entrepreneur delegation visits a Spanish company operating in the Big Health industry



⬆ Sam Hou Fai with the Permanent Representative of China to the World Trade Organization, Li Yongjie



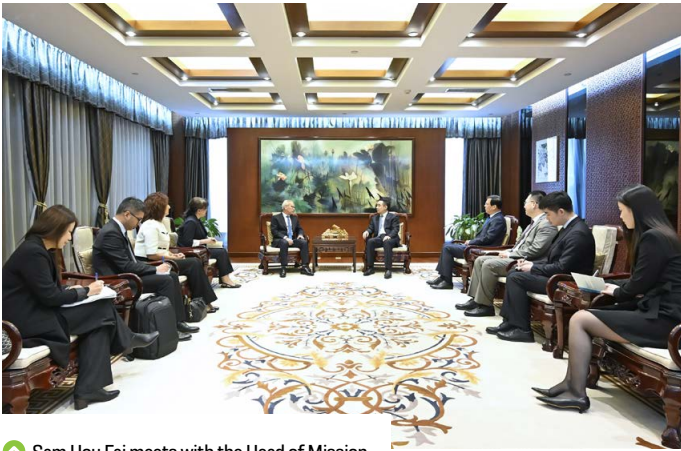
⬆ The Chief Executive visits the Macao Economic and Trade Office to the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland



Sam Hou Fai meets with the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations in Geneva and other International Organisations in Switzerland, Jia Guide



The Chief Executive with Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the EU's European External Action Service, Olof Skoog



Sam Hou Fai meets with the Head of Mission of China to the European Union, Cai Run



Sam Hou Fai visits the Macao Economic and Trade Office to the European Union



Meeting between the Chief Executive and the Chinese Ambassador to Belgium, Fei Shengchao



The Chief Executive meets with Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Agriculture, David Clarinval

**RECYCLING**

# SHUFFLING TOWARDS

Text **Tony Lai**  
Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**



◀ Elaine Wong says the recycling process provides a range of potential applications for the resulting fibres

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# SUSTAINABILITY

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On any given day in Macao's casinos, thousands of decks pass through the hands of dealers and players, only to be swiftly retired and destroyed. Long treated as by-product of the entertainment industry, these cards are now at the centre of **Fnetlink Technology's** effort to turn waste into value

**A**cross Macao's casinos, playing cards are central to the rhythm of gaming floors, moving rapidly through baccarat, blackjack and other table games before disappearing just as quickly. To safeguard the integrity of play, decks are retired after short use and destroyed. The result is a constant stream of highly specialised waste, generated in volumes that often go unnoticed behind the spectacle of the city's entertainment resorts.

For years, the fate of this waste has followed a familiar path. Some is incinerated locally, while some is transported for processing in the Chinese mainland under greener arrangements.

Either way, the lifecycle of these cards has largely ended outside public view and beyond the city itself.

A different approach is now emerging. Local technology firm Fnetlink Technology Co. Ltd. has partnered with Macau integrated resort operator MGM China Holdings Ltd. to develop what they describe as a fully localised recycling and upcycling process for used playing cards. The initiative was unveiled in March this year, after securing an operating permit for a 1,394-square-metre processing facility.

"Macao needs solutions like this because our city generates an extraordinary volume of waste," says Elaine

Wong, general manager of Fnetlink, in an interview with Macao Magazine. "If we turn waste into reusable inputs, we can reduce the burden on the planet."

## **Setting a standard**

In a city where tourism and entertainment underpin economic activity, consumption levels are correspondingly high. According to the latest Report on the State of the Environment of Macao released by the Environmental Protection Bureau, municipal solid waste per capita rose 4 percent to 2.10 kilograms per person per day in 2024, surpassing levels in nearby cities such as Hong Kong

and Guangzhou. Overall municipal solid waste increased 5.1 percent year-on-year to 526,979 tonnes in 2024, with paper and cardboard accounting for about 24.3 percent of the total, showed the report.

Playing cards are not tracked as a separate category in official data. However, some environmental groups estimate that at least 15,000 tonnes of used cards are discarded annually by Macao's casinos. If broadly accurate, this would represent a notable share of the city's waste stream.

Figures from MGM China highlight the scale at an operational level. The company says its two resorts in Macao generate six to seven tonnes of used cards each day, accounting for about a third of its daily solid waste. Once fully implemented, the recycling

and upcycling programme is expected to process roughly 3,000 tonnes of MGM China's used cards each year, offering a meaningful reduction in waste while potentially setting a precedent for the wider industry.

In announcing the initiative, MGM China described it as the first integrated resort operator in Macao to establish a fully localised, end-to-end system for recycling and upcycling used playing cards. Beyond reducing disposal volumes, the company sees potential for higher-value reuse, supporting applications in green materials and related industries.

Some other integrated resort operators in Macao, such as Melco Resorts & Entertainment Ltd and Wynn Macau Ltd, also have recycling initiatives for playing cards.

Wynn Macau Ltd launched in November 2023 a programme to recycle and convert shredded playing cards into raw materials to make recycled paper products. Melco Resorts stated in 2025, a portion of its playing cards were processed into pulp that can be remanufactured into paper products such as box fillers, cup holders and paper towels.

**Versatile applications**

Behind the project lies several years of development. Fnetlink's Ms Wong explained that the initiative builds on an automated card-shredding system co-developed with MGM China in 2023. It is designed to improve efficiency while reducing physical strain & injury risks for staff.

Because local regulations require gaming equipment such as playing cards to be destroyed on-site, shredding takes place within MGM China's integrated resorts before any material can leave the premises. The shredded remnants are then transported to the processing facility, where dry fibre-regeneration equipment converts them into recycled fibres without the use of water.

"It ensures almost nothing is lost in conversion," Ms Wong said, adding that the process achieves a recycling rate close to 100 percent.



↕ Fnetlink's facility can process about 30 tonnes of used playing cards per day

The underlying technology, she explained, is sourced from the Chinese mainland and adapted to suit Macao's distinctive waste stream. "Hardly anyone has processed playing cards this way before because this substantial volume of discarded cards is something that only happens in Macao," she stated.

Unlike ordinary paper, playing cards are designed with a coated finish that withstands constant handling, requiring specialised recycling methods. "This solution is focused specifically on cards," Ms Wong noted. "The same approach could be adapted for other kinds of waste, but it would require equipment modifications."

The resulting fibres offer a range of potential applications. "These [recycled] fibres have a wide range of potential uses," the Fnetlink general manager suggested. "They can be used as filling materials, made into park benches, litter bins and paving tiles, or turned into all sorts of tables and chairs. With further processing, they could even be converted back into paper."

This versatility points to opportunities beyond waste reduction, as it could also support new green business initiatives. "If Macao is throwing away 30 tonnes of playing cards every day, that's a volume that could



🟢 The automated card-shredding process aims to boost operational efficiency while reducing the risk of occupational injuries

generate a huge supply of raw material after recycling and remanufacturing," Ms Wong said. "This is something unique to Macao, and over time it could even become an industry, because it can be turned into many downstream products."

Turning that potential into viable commercial products, however, depends on market demand.

"First, we have to identify

demand before we can make products from these recycled fibres," she noted. "We're now pushing ahead to see how these [fibres] can become items that Macao may export in the future, supplying Chinese mainland and other markets."

### **Moving to a circular economy**

To that end, Fnetlink and MGM China are exploring



possible applications while introducing the concept to other integrated resort operators in Macao. The facility has the capacity to process around 30 tonnes of used cards per day – equivalent to roughly 10,950 tonnes annually – well beyond MGM China’s own requirements.

After securing the operating permit for the facility, Ms Wong said the company began discussions with other operators at the 2026 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF), a key platform for advancing green solutions and circular economy initiatives in the city.

The partnership between Fnetlink and MGM China reflects a broader shift in Macao, as government and industry seek to transition from a linear model of consumption – where resources are used briefly and discarded – to a more circular approach. A United Nations Environment Assembly resolution defines the circular economy as a system in which products and materials are reused, remanufactured, recycled or recovered, reducing waste and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

This direction was evident at the latest edition of MIECF, where organisers introduced a “Zero-waste Circular

Economy Exhibition Zone” to showcase developments in waste management, resource recovery, sustainable innovation, and green building.

The concept is already embedded in policy in a number of jurisdictions. The Central Government introduced a circular economy promotion law in 2008, which came into force the following year. The mainland authorities have since reinforced the policy through successive action plans. The National Development and Reform Commission’s 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan for the Circular Economy (2021–2025) positioned the circular economy as key to addressing the nation’s environmental challenges and supporting economic growth.

For Ms Wong, the relevance to Macao is clear. “Macao really needs this, because the volume of waste and discarded items here is astonishing,” she stated. “If you process these materials, they can be turned into recyclable resources.”

### **Overcoming challenges**

Bringing such projects to life, however, is not without challenges. Securing a suitable site for the processing facility proved particularly complex, taking more than a year due to space constraints and

*There are plenty of materials that can be turned from waste into value, so we hope to use this opportunity to do more for Macao*

**Elaine Wong**

General manager of Fnetlink Technology

regulatory requirements.

“Because we’re Macao people, and we live here, we all want a better environment for Macao, for the next generation and for all of us,” she stressed. “Everyone should do their part. That’s why, even when it’s been difficult, we’ve gritted our teeth and kept going.”

The recycling initiative builds on a longstanding partnership between Fnetlink and MGM China. Fnetlink, part of a Shenzhen-based group specialising in software-defined networking (SDN) and cloud services, established its Macao operations in 2017 and formally began work in 2019, with its client portfolio encompassing also governmental departments.

MGM China was Fnetlink’s first network-services client, Ms Wong noted, and the relationship has



since evolved into a broader collaboration that now extends beyond technology into sustainability.

Fnetlink, she added, had no prior experience in recycling before taking on the challenge. However, it was able to draw on the technical resources and supplier networks of its mainland parent company.

“Fnetlink on the mainland is very specialised, focusing on providing network services,” Ms Wong said. “Because Macao always talks about diversification, what we do here also has to be more diversified.”

The experience has since widened the company’s ambitions. Having established a viable model for processing playing-card waste, Fnetlink is now open to further opportunities in upcycling and environmental solutions.

Macao’s relatively small scale, Ms Wong suggested, can be an advantage, allowing for flexibility and experimentation. “In Macao, nothing is on an especially large scale, and we can have teams to handle operations in different sectors,” she explained. With a workforce of around a dozen people,

adaptability is essential. “The [business] volumes aren’t huge, so each person can cover several tasks. In my case, I’ve ended up being a bit of an all-rounder,” she added.

The company also sees broader potential in rethinking waste as a resource. “We observe that there are plenty of materials that can be turned from waste into value, so we hope to use this opportunity to do more for Macao,” Ms Wong said. “This allows our company to have multi-track development and supports the MSAR Government’s call for diversification.” ■

## MINISTERIAL MEETING

# MACAO RECLAIMS APEC TOURISM SPOTLIGHT

Text **Tiago Azevedo**

Twelve years after welcoming tourism ministers from across the Asia-Pacific, Macao once again takes centre stage as host of the **13<sup>th</sup> APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting** in June, where senior tourism officials will gather to discuss travel, connectivity and sustainable growth

**M**acao is set to host the 13<sup>th</sup> APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting and the 67<sup>th</sup> APEC Tourism Working Group Meeting from June 24 to 28, marking the return of one of the Asia-Pacific region's highest-level tourism gatherings to the city for the first time since 2014.

The meetings will bring together senior tourism officials and representatives from member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to discuss future tourism development, regional cooperation and industry priorities across the region.

The tourism-related meetings taking place in June form part of APEC 2026, which China is hosting for the third time. Under arrangements by the Central Government, the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) was selected to host the Tourism Ministerial Meeting, one of the key sectoral events

under the APEC framework, as well as the Tourism Working Group Meeting.

APEC's Tourism Working Group was established in 1991 as a platform for tourism authorities across member economies to exchange information, share best practices and strengthen cooperation in tourism-related policy and trade. Macao has participated in the group as a guest economy since 2001.

Macao's Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai said the return of APEC's Tourism Ministerial Meeting to the city carries particular significance, noting that the city last hosted the event in 2014. He expressed gratitude to the Central Government for its support and stated that the MSAR Government would work closely with relevant authorities to ensure smooth preparations and contribute to the success of APEC 2026.

The hosting of the meeting also aligns with Macao's long-term development goal of



Senior tourism officials from APEC member economies will gather in Macao in June

becoming a world centre of tourism and leisure, while supporting efforts to diversify the local economy, according to the MSAR Government.

The Macao authorities also said they would use the meetings to highlight both the Chinese mainland's modern development and Macao's multicultural characteristics, leveraging its role as a platform linking China with international markets.

### **International exposure**

Industry representatives view the event as an important opportunity to raise Macao's international profile and reinforce its role as a destination for meetings and exhibitions.

Alan Ho, president of the Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition & Tourism Sectors, said the return of the ministerial meeting reflects continued support for Macao's development.

"The APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting was last held in Macao in 2014. And, just like then, this meeting shows our country's recognition

and support towards Macao as a world centre of tourism and leisure, helping the city uplift its status globally," Mr Ho told Macao Magazine.

He said the event would further strengthen Macao's position in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector.

"The hosting of this ministerial meeting solidifies Macao as a tourism and MICE destination, and the city can present to the attending delegates its world-class tourism facilities and high-quality services," Mr Ho stated.

The representative also pointed to the visibility that accompanies an event of this scale. "Notably, the meeting will invite international press coverage, and that will result in a promotional focus on Macao," Mr Ho noted. "By hosting an international event like this ministerial meeting, it will also help Macao gain more opportunities from organisers looking to host other significant, international events."

That exposure may prove particularly

valuable as destinations across Asia compete for high-value business events and international conferences. Over the past decade, Macao has expanded its convention infrastructure, diversified its tourism offerings and strengthened its portfolio of integrated resorts, event venues and hospitality assets.

The city now possesses facilities capable of hosting large-scale international meetings while maintaining the compact urban accessibility that many organisers value.

Macao hosted a record 1,861 MICE events in 2025, according to data from the city's Statistics and Census Service. Nearly half of these events were centred on the "1+4" industries, with high technology and big health industries showing the most notable growth, increasing by 48 percent and 32 percent from the prior year, respectively, the bureau said.

### APEC legacy

The 2026 gathering marks a return to the city after Macao hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting in September 2014. That meeting resulted in the adoption of the "Macao Declaration on Building a New Future for Asia-Pacific Tourism Cooperation and Development". The document promoted closer cooperation among APEC economies in tourism development and identified priorities including

tourism market integration, smart tourism, sustainability, travel facilitation and connectivity.

At the time, ministers set a goal of reaching 800 million international tourist arrivals among APEC economies by 2025 and called for tourism to be developed as a strategic pillar industry within the region.

The Asia-Pacific region remains one of the world's most dynamic tourism markets. According to figures presented by the APEC Tourism Working Group, global tourist arrivals reached 1.46 billion in 2024. The Asia-Pacific region recorded the fastest growth, with 317.54 million international arrivals in 2024, up 34 percent year-on-year, accounting for 21.7 percent of global tourism arrivals. Tourism receipts in the region reached 422.9 billion U.S. dollars, a rise of 24 percent, representing 20.6 percent of global tourism revenue.

The upward trend continued in 2025, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism). An estimated 1.52 billion international tourists were recorded around the world in 2025, as per UN Tourism, which said the results "were driven by strong demand, robust performance from large source markets globally, as well as the ongoing recovery of destinations in Asia and the Pacific". Arrivals in Asia and the Pacific stood at circa 331 million last year, up approximately 6 percent from 2024.

The June meetings in Macao are expected to support implementation of the APEC Tourism Working Group Strategic Plan 2025–2029, which outlines four priority areas for tourism cooperation across member economies. These include digital transformation; human capital development; travel facilitation and competitiveness; and sustainable tourism growth.

The plan places emphasis on expanding the use of digital technologies across tourism supply chains, improving workforce skills, strengthening transport connectivity and supporting sustainable and inclusive tourism development. ■

✓ Macao hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting in 2014



# Scheme for Supporting the Development of Macao FIRST-STORE Economy

## Supporting non-local brands in opening their FIRST STORES in the Macao Special Administrative Region

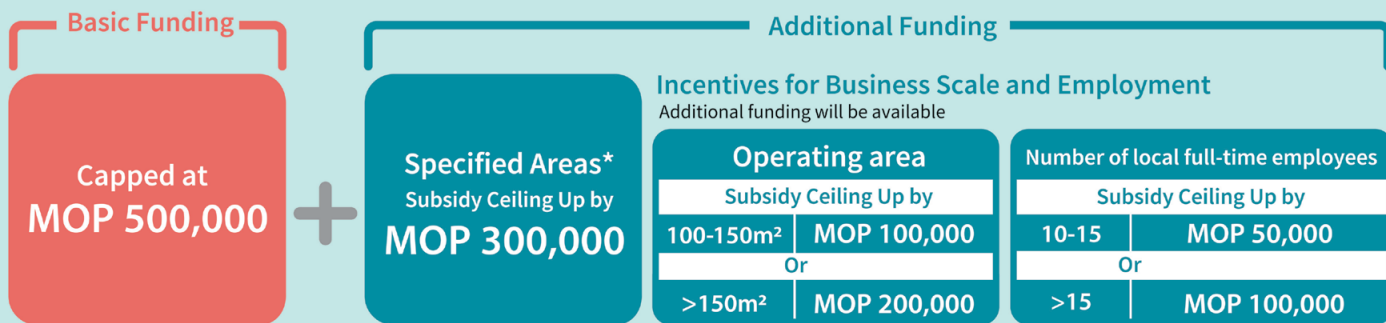
### Eligibility

Eligible international brands, particularly those from Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries, and the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Taiwan region, which has established their first brick-and-mortar stores in Macao since 1 August 2025, or those intending to set up their First Stores in Macao

### Funding Amount

The limit of the sum of basic funding and additional funding is **MOP 1,000,000**

The scheme aims to support the initiation and operating expenses of non-local brands when establishing their first brick-and-mortar stores in Macao  
The funding will be settled in reimbursement in three instalments



\* "Specified Areas" include Zona de Aterros do Porto Exterior, Areia Preta and Iao Hon, Barca, Barra/Manduco, Fai Chi Kei, Doca do Lamau, Tamagnini Barbosa and Ilha Verde



Details and Application

### Application Period

Phase 2

2026.05.01 – 2026.07.31

Phase 3

2026.11.01 – 2027.01.31

### Enquiries

Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute

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[www.ipim.gov.mo](http://www.ipim.gov.mo)

# REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROPELS GBA AVIATION CLUSTER

Text Viviana Chan

The rapid expansion of airports across the Greater Bay Area reflects a policy-driven strategy in which infrastructure is often built ahead of demand, industry experts say. The approach is reshaping the region into a **multi-hub aviation system** that blends competition with growing coordination across passenger and cargo networks

**T**he Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is rapidly emerging as one of the world's most influential aviation clusters. Latest figures show that airports across the region handled 237 million passenger journeys in 2025, alongside approximately 9.72 million tonnes of cargo and mail. The scale of activity not only places the cluster among the leading players in global civil aviation, but also underscores the momentum generated by deeper regional economic integration.

The Greater Bay Area's aviation network comprises three major hub airports in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, alongside key airports in Zhuhai and Macao, and regional facilities in Huizhou and Foshan. Together, the network serves more than 200 cities worldwide.

Unlike many aviation markets shaped



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## Airport network in the Greater Bay Area

### MAJOR HUB AIRPORTS

- Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (CAN)
- Shenzhen Baoan International Airport (SZX)
- Hong Kong International Airport (HKG)

### KEY AIRPORTS

- Zhuhai Jinwan Airport (ZUH)
- Macau International Airport (MFM)

### REGIONAL AIRPORTS

- Foshan Shadi Airport (FUO)
- Huizhou Pingtan Airport (HUZ)

### UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Pearl River Delta Hub (Guangzhou New) Airport

primarily by passenger demand, the rapid expansion of the Greater Bay Area's aviation sector bears the hallmarks of a policy-led model. Andrew Yuen Chi-lok, executive director of the Aviation Policy and Research Centre at the Chinese University of

Hong Kong, says airport development across the region is driven less by organic market growth than by state-backed infrastructure investment and strategic planning.

“Demand is certainly growing, but the pace of infrastructure expansion is not necessarily a direct response to that demand. Government support, particularly at the regional level, is the key driver,” Mr Yuen told Macao Magazine. He adds that aviation development on the Chinese mainland is closely tied to broader urban strategies, with cities seeking to use the sector to stimulate economic growth.

Samuel Tong Kai Chung, president of the Institute of Macau Civil Aviation Policy Research, shares a similar assessment. Drawing on decades of industry experience – including roles at Macau International Airport as head of research, marketing director and strategic adviser – he argues that the Greater Bay Area's airport system has been developed not simply to meet existing demand, but as a strategic form of “productive service” infrastructure aligned with national and regional industrial and trade policies.

“Aviation, whether passenger or cargo, is essentially a form of productive service that exists to support industries such as tourism and manufacturing,” Mr Tong said. “Its development must be forward-looking. Without earlier planning, current demand simply could not have been met.”

One example of such long-term planning is the Pearl River Delta Hub (Guangzhou New) Airport, a 41.81-billion-yuan project that broke ground in March. Located in Foshan's Gaoming district, about 100 kilometres from Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, the new facility is intended to address aviation capacity shortages in the western Greater Bay Area.

The airport will feature two runways, a terminal spanning around 260,000 square metres, 94 aircraft stands and supporting infrastructure. It has been designed with an initial annual capacity of 30 million passengers



Construction work at the 41.81-billion-yuan Pearl River Delta Hub (Guangzhou New) Airport

and 500,000 tonnes of cargo and mail.

The project is intended not only to ease pressure on Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, but also to rebalance an aviation landscape that has historically been more heavily concentrated in the eastern side of the Greater Bay Area. More than 20 million people are expected to fall within its service area.

### **Complex network of hubs**

The “Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”, released jointly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in 2019, already envisaged the creation of a “world-class airport cluster”. The blueprint called for airports across the region to pursue “differential development and positive interaction”, while also advancing intermodal code-sharing services, airspace coordination and air traffic management cooperation.

The structure of the Greater Bay Area’s airport system differs markedly from the conventional “single hub with satellite airports” model seen elsewhere. Instead, it functions as a complex network of multiple large-scale hubs operating in close proximity, with elements of both competition and collaboration. Within a radius of less than 100 kilometres, five major airports are densely concentrated – a configuration rarely seen elsewhere in global aviation.

The core hubs of the aviation cluster – Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong – all posted strong results last year. Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport reached a historic milestone in 2025, handling 83.59 million passengers and processing 2.44 million tonnes of cargo and mail, both record highs for the airport.

Last October, the airport officially opened Terminal 3 and its fifth runway, becoming the first civil airport in China to operate five commercial runways. The

expansion increased annual passenger capacity to 120 million and boosted cargo-handling capacity to 3.8 million tonnes.

Shenzhen Baoan International Airport handled 66.49 million passenger journeys in 2025, while Hong Kong International Airport – long recognised as the world’s busiest cargo hub – recorded a 15 percent year-on-year rise in passenger traffic to 61 million travellers. Cargo throughput at the airport climbed by around 3 percent to 5.07 million tonnes.

Airports in Zhuhai, Macao and Huizhou also recorded cargo growth last year. Cargo and mail throughput increased by 15 percent in Zhuhai, about 1 percent in Macao and

25 percent in Huizhou compared with the previous year. Zhuhai, meanwhile, remains the busiest passenger Chinese mainland airport operating only domestic flights.

The Airports Council International projects that air passenger demand in the Greater Bay Area will reach 420 million by 2035.

### **Competition and coordination**

Mr Yuen argues that the Greater Bay Area differs fundamentally from airport systems in cities such as New York, London or Tokyo. In those markets, a dominant mega-hub typically anchors a network of smaller airports, allowing resources to be concentrated more efficiently.



➤ The new Terminal 2 facilities at Hong Kong International Airport commenced operations on May 27

“Airports benefit significantly from economies of scale,” Mr Yuen said, noting that larger concentrations of flights and passenger flows tend to reduce operating costs while improving convenience.

By contrast, Hong Kong and Guangzhou – the Greater Bay Area’s two leading airports – occupy somewhat overlapping positions, with both competing for international transfer traffic and long-haul routes. In 2025, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport launched, resumed or increased frequencies on nearly 40 international passenger routes, while Hong Kong International Airport added 30 new destinations, including Abu Dhabi and Brussels.

At the same time, increasing functional complementarity is emerging within the Greater Bay Area aviation cluster. For instance, Hong Kong International Airport, with its extensive global network, is focused primarily on long-haul international services, while neighbouring Shenzhen concentrates on dense domestic connectivity.

In 2024, Airport Authority Hong Kong – the operator of Hong Kong International Airport – acquired a 35-percent stake in Zhuhai Jinwan Airport, deepening cooperation between the two sides. The partnership had already produced a series of joint projects, including the “Fly-Via-Zhuhai-HK” service launched in December 2023. Under the arrangement, passengers can fly from Chinese mainland cities to Zhuhai airport before transferring by bonded coach via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge directly into the restricted area of Hong Kong International Airport for onward international flights.

On the cargo side, the “Air-Land Fresh Lane” service, launched in April 2025 by the two airports, provides a dedicated logistics channel for importing live and chilled seafood and fruit into the Greater Bay Area, streamlining customs clearance and quarantine procedures.

Experts agree this tiered division of labour – spanning international, domestic and regional feeder functions across



*The pace of infrastructure expansion is not necessarily a direct response to demand. Government support, particularly at the regional level, is the key driver*

**Andrew Yuen Chi-lok**

Executive director of the Aviation Policy and Research Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

the Greater Bay Area airports – reflects growing coordination within the cluster.

Yet collaboration is not without challenges. Mr Yuen suggests discussions over airport positioning could have progressed more quickly, but differing priorities among regional governments have sometimes affected coordination.

With additional capacity continuing to come online – including Hong Kong International Airport’s third runway, which opened in late 2024, followed by the revamped Terminal 2, inaugurated in May this year – Mr Yuen says higher-level national coordination is becoming increasingly important. A policy-led approach is essential to avoid resource duplication and turn competition into collective regional advantage, he argues, particularly as civil airspace becomes more congested in the Greater Bay Area.

To improve airspace management across the region, the Chinese mainland, Macao and Hong Kong are streamlining communication channels. In May, the three sides held a

high-level aviation air traffic management meeting in Xi'an, where representatives from the civil aviation authorities from the Chinese mainland, Macao and Hong Kong discussed the implementation of a range of airspace optimisation measures aimed at improving the operational efficiency of flights within the Greater Bay Area. Among those attending was Pun Wa Kin, president of Macao's Civil Aviation Authority.

**Macao's niche strategy**

Rather than competing directly with larger hubs such as Hong Kong and Guangzhou, Macau International Airport has pursued a more specialised positioning strategy. Mr Tong says the airport should align closely with national priorities, supporting Macao's role as "One Centre, One Platform" – a world centre for tourism and leisure and a platform for economic and trade cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries – while also focusing on markets linked to the "Belt and Road" initiative.



*Development must be forward-looking. Without earlier planning, current demand simply could not have been met*

**Samuel Tong Kai Chung**  
President of the Institute of Macau Civil Aviation Policy Research

Mr Tong argues that airport connectivity directly influences people's willingness to travel to Macao as a destination, noting that direct flights are often more competitive than itineraries requiring onward ground or ferry transport from Hong Kong. Transit passenger



Shenzhen Baoan International Airport handled 66.49 million passenger journeys in 2025



*Based on my 30 years of industry experience, I believe the current planning is appropriate*

**Victor Lei Kuok Fai**  
Chairman of the International Logistics  
and Forwarding Association of Macau

services meanwhile underline the airport's growing role in serving the western Pearl River Delta, particularly by complementing Zhuhai's lack of international flight connections.

Macau International Airport handled nearly 2.12 million passengers in the first quarter of 2026, representing year-on-year growth of around 15 percent. Aircraft movements rose 10 percent to 15,952. Travellers from the Chinese mainland accounted for 41 percent of total passengers, while those from the Taiwan region represented 19 percent, with the remainder coming from elsewhere in Asia.

The airport recorded 7.52 million passengers in 2025, a slight decline from the previous year and roughly 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Infrastructure expansion has nevertheless continued, with works under way as it seeks to increase its annual handling capacity to 15 million passengers by 2030.

Mr Tong says the expansion is intended not only to meet current demand, but also to provide strategic reserve capacity aligned with national priorities. This, he adds, will help Macau maintain a leading position in niche aviation markets within the region's multi-airport system.

Addressing concerns over potential overcapacity among Greater Bay Area airports,

the expert points to the broader international picture. The United States, he notes, has more than 10,000 airports of various types, while China has only a few hundred. Official figures show that the United States had 19,829 airports in 2024, of which 5,176 were for public use. By comparison, the Chinese mainland had 270 certified transport airports at the end of 2025.

"From a long-term domestic demand perspective, the number of airports in China is not excessive, and there remains significant room for expansion," he said.

Mr Tong adds that as the Chinese mainland expands unilateral visa-free policies aimed at attracting more European and American visitors, further aviation expansion will become inevitable. In this context, Macao is exploring long-haul route development, potentially in partnership with international airlines.

He also argues that one of the Greater Bay Area's most distinctive strengths lies in its diversified aviation rights framework under the "One Country, Two Systems" model. Unlike aviation clusters such as New York or Tokyo, which operate within a single jurisdiction, the Greater Bay Area comprises three separate customs territories. Under national authorisation, the Macao and Hong Kong special administrative regions are able to negotiate independent air service agreements with overseas partners.

"Macao has signed more than 40 air service agreements, while Hong Kong has even more," Mr Tong said. "This diversity of aviation rights is unique to the Greater Bay Area and provides a strong foundation for participating in global competition."

### **Global cargo gateway**

Within the Greater Bay Area's aviation strategy, integrated air cargo logistics is increasingly viewed as central to regional competitiveness.

Victor Lei Kuok Fai, chairman of the International Logistics and Forwarding Association of Macau, told Macao Magazine that the presence of multiple airports

across the Greater Bay Area should not be seen as a source of rivalry, but as part of an interconnected logistics system. “Based on my 30 years of industry experience, I believe the current planning is appropriate,” he said.

Mr Lei explains that modern logistics operations are inherently “cross-airport” in nature, with cargo flows shifting between airports depending on route density, cost and delivery time.

## 420 million

Projected air passenger demand in the Greater Bay Area by 2035, according to the Airports Council International

The Greater Bay Area’s flexibility allows goods to move efficiently across the network rather than being constrained by the route availability of any single airport. If one destination lacks certain long-haul connections, operators can instead route cargo through other airports in the region, creating a complementary logistics system.

Mr Tong describes air cargo as a “productive service” supporting manufacturing and trade. With the Greater Bay Area’s gross domestic product exceeding 15 trillion yuan in 2025, he notes, the region’s growing output of high-tech and high-value products is generating increasing demand for time-sensitive logistics services.

The trend is also creating opportunities for integrated passenger and cargo operations. Mr Tong says Macao’s recent civil aviation law reforms – including the liberalisation of home-based carrier licences – are expected to increase competition and improve the economic efficiency of aircraft belly-cargo utilisation.

Facing land constraints, Macau International Airport has increasingly turned to regional cooperation to expand logistics capacity. Central to that strategy is the Macau



International Airport Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal, widely regarded as a cornerstone of the city’s future cargo infrastructure. Scheduled for completion by late 2026 and expected to begin operations in the first half of 2027, the facility is designed to handle up to 300,000 tonnes of cargo annually.

Mr Lei describes the Hengqin project as far more than a simple warehouse, calling it a critical tool for strengthening Macao’s logistics capabilities. Under the model, cargo will complete security screening, weighing and palletisation in Hengqin before being transported by sealed trucks directly to Macau International Airport for loading.



The “remote gate-in” arrangement is designed not only to ease space constraints at the airport, but also to reduce cross-boundary processing times by shifting key procedures upstream.

Mr Tong says the strategic importance of the Hengqin facility also lies in its potential to support China’s rapidly growing cross-border e-commerce sector. Within the framework of multiple customs territories, upstream logistics arrangements can help connect Chinese mainland production more efficiently with overseas consumer markets, he argues.

Similar models have already been implemented elsewhere in the region.

Hong Kong International Airport, for example, has developed a sea-air intermodal network linking it to several places within the Greater Bay Area, enabling seamless cargo and passenger transfers.

Mr Lei says Macao should pursue a similarly integrated strategy, combining Hengqin’s policy advantages with the city’s distinct aviation rights framework. With the support of the upstream cargo terminal, he argues, Macao can play a flexible transit role within the Greater Bay Area’s emerging “global cargo gateway”, overcoming the geographical constraints that have limited the city’s aviation sector. ■

## TECHNOLOGY

# CHINA POWERS THE HUMANOID ROBOT REVOLUTION

Text **Viviana Chan**

China is leveraging its manufacturing scale, deep supply chains and deployment experience to push **humanoid robotics** beyond experimental prototypes and into early real-world applications

**C**hina is increasingly bringing humanoid robots out of the laboratory and into everyday settings, as public expectations surrounding their role in daily life continue to grow. From household assistants and elderly care companions to machines capable of running errands or providing personal services,

visions of humanoid robots integrated into ordinary life have become more prominent among Chinese consumers in recent years.

Those expectations have been shaped in part by a series of high-profile demonstrations suggesting the technology may be approaching a turning point. In April, for example, a humanoid robot developed







Humanoid robot “Flash” completed the 2026 Beijing E-Town Half Marathon in 50 minutes and 26 seconds, beating the human world record

by a team linked to Chinese smartphone maker Honor completed the Beijing E-Town half-marathon in 50 minutes and 26 seconds, beating the human world record by more than six minutes. During the previous edition of the race – which included a humanoid robot category for the first time – the fastest robot completed the course in two hours, 40 minutes and 42 seconds.

Earlier, in February, humanoid robots performed backflips and martial arts routines during the annual

Spring Festival Gala, one of China’s most watched television broadcasts.

Fuelling China’s current humanoid robotics boom are rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in so-called “deep learning” – the mathematical framework underpinning large language models (LLMs) such as DeepSeek. Chinese robotics researchers are now developing advanced systems capable of combining perception, reasoning and movement, often described as vision-

language-action (VLA) models, or more broadly as “embodied intelligence” or “physical AI”.

In simple terms, embodied AI combines a “brain” – the AI model itself – with a physical “body”. The aim is for machines to learn to navigate the physical world in much the same way LLMs process language: by absorbing and analysing vast amounts of data rather than relying on rigid programming rules.

China’s strength in humanoid robotics is

also rooted in its broader industrial ecosystem. Over the past decade, the country has become the world's largest market for industrial robots, with annual installations exceeding those of all other countries combined. According to the International Federation of Robotics, China accounted for 54 percent of global industrial robot deployments in 2024, with 295,000 units installed – the highest annual total on record. For the first time, Chinese manufacturers also outsold foreign suppliers within the domestic market. China's operational stock of industrial robots surpassed



*We are not yet at mass adoption, but the shift from pure research to industrial trials is accelerating*

**Gao Yang**  
Professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

2 million units in 2024, the highest figure of any country.

These machines are widely used in sectors such as automotive and electronics manufacturing, where standardised processes allow automation to scale efficiently. In highly automated facilities – often referred to as “dark factories” since they can theoretically operate without human workers – industrial robots can function for extended periods with minimal intervention, highlighting the maturity of this segment.

#### **Early market leader**

Chinese firms accounted for more than 80 percent of the estimated 16,000 humanoid robots sold globally in 2025, according to research firm Counterpoint. The Shanghai-based start-up AgiBot topped the list of global vendors, capturing 31.9 percent of humanoid robot installations, followed by Chinese firms Unitree, UbiTech and Leju. Together, the four companies accounted for more than two-thirds of global sales last year.

AgiBot began mass production of its X2 and G2 robots in 2025. Its robots have achieved commercial deployments across hospitality, entertainment, manufacturing and logistics.

Unitree, best known for its quadruped robots

and expertise in dynamic motion and balance control, held a 26.5 percent share of humanoid robot sales last year. In early May, the company drew international attention after unveiling the GDO1 robot, described as the world's first production-ready manned “mecha” – a reference to giant robots popularised in science fiction. Standing roughly 2.8 metres tall and weighing around 500 kilograms, the machine allows a human pilot to operate it from an open cockpit inside its torso.

Counterpoint predicts cumulative global installations of humanoid robots will surpass 100,000 units by 2027, with logistics, manufacturing and automotive industries accounting for 72 percent of annual deployments.

Investment bank Morgan Stanley forecasts the global humanoid market to skyrocket by 2050, when it could exceed 5 trillion U.S. dollars, including supply chains, maintenance and support services. China is projected to account for the world's largest humanoid robot population in 2050, with more than 302 million units nationwide.

#### **Competitive advantages**

According to Professor Gao Yang from the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Hong Kong

University of Science and Technology and founding director of its Centre for AI Robotics in Space Sustainability, China's position in humanoid robotics is closely tied to its manufacturing base and industrial infrastructure.

"China's deep supply chain for industrial robots, including motors, reducers, sensors and controllers, provides a critical cost and speed advantage," Prof. Gao told Macao Magazine. "Additionally, large-scale deployment experience gives Chinese companies practical knowledge in robot



*General-purpose robots require a very long development cycle, but specialised robots can enter the market more quickly*

**Hon Chi Tin**

Associate professor at Macau University of Science and Technology

integration, maintenance and system optimisation."

That industrial foundation has enabled Chinese companies to move more rapidly than foreign competitors from prototype to deployment. Dense networks of suppliers concentrated in industrial clusters, particularly in provinces such as Zhejiang and Guangdong, support the competitiveness of Chinese companies in the global market.

Government backing has further accelerated the sector's growth. Central and local authorities have channelled funding and industrial planning efforts into robotics and AI, while encouraging the deployment of practical applications across industries.

The sector has been identified in the country's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) as a strategically important future industry. In February, China introduced its first national standard system for humanoid robotics, aimed at promoting development through unified technical requirements and safety protocols while encouraging greater modularisation and compatibility between components.

Parallel efforts across different regions have also accelerated the development of industrial

clusters, testing platforms and pilot programmes.

In May, a national pilot base for embodied robot applications was launched in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province. The site features more than 130 robots operating across over 30 vocational scenarios, ranging from catering and unmanned retail to power line inspections, fruit picking and underground operations.

Hangzhou alone is now home to more than 700 companies involved in embodied robotics, generating an industrial output value of 106.8 billion yuan in 2025, according to Xinhua News Agency. The city reportedly accounts for more than half of China's humanoid robot companies.

### **From research to reality**

While public discussion around humanoid robots often focuses on future general-purpose machines capable of performing a wide range of domestic and industrial tasks, industry figures are taking a more pragmatic approach, prioritising applications that can be deployed in the near term. That reflects a broader trajectory in robotics development, in which systems typically evolve from handling simple, structured tasks to operating in increasingly

complex environments before eventually approaching general-purpose functionality.

Prof. Gao says humanoid robots remain in the “early stages of real-world economic deployment”, particularly compared with the scale of public expectations. Still, she adds, the transition “has clearly begun”.

“We are not yet at mass adoption, but the shift from pure research to industrial trials is accelerating,” she said.

The gap between expectation and reality is particularly evident in household services and elderly care, often seen as key future markets. According to Prof. Gao, these environments remain among the most difficult for current systems.

“In the near term, viability is low for fully autonomous household or elderly care robots,” she said, citing the need for advanced dexterity, safe physical interaction and complex scene understanding. “Integration will be gradual and task specific.”

“Without a clear, high-value task, neither technology readiness nor cost reduction will trigger adoption,” Prof. Gao argued. “Technology readiness... is the current bottleneck.”

Instead, the first large-

scale wave of adoption is expected to occur in factories and logistics operations. “Factories and warehouses offer structured, predictable settings where repetitive tasks can be automated,” she said, adding that these environments provide clearer returns on investment and are easier to adapt to robotic systems.

### **Step-by-step approach**

Hon Chi Tin, associate professor for the Department of Engineering Science at Macau University of Science and Technology and chief executive of Singou Technology (Macau) Ltd, says recent progress in humanoid robotics has been driven largely by advances in embodied AI.

Founded in 2015 and linked to MUST, Singou Technology develops AI algorithms for service robots and holds more than 100 patents.

Embodied AI represents a significant shift from earlier robotic systems that relied heavily on pre-programmed instructions, according to Prof. Hon. “In the past, movements had to be extremely precise; otherwise, the robot could easily fail or fall,” he said. “Now, robots have a higher tolerance for variation – for example, they can grasp objects even when position or size differs.”



*In some recent events, robots have been used as hosts or interactive performers*

### **Kelvin Che Sio Wang**

Vice-chairman of the Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition & Tourism Sectors

Such advances have made robotic behaviour appear more fluid and adaptable, contributing to the growing visibility of humanoid machines at demonstrations and public events. But Prof. Hon cautioned that these developments do not yet translate into large-scale deployment in complex service environments.

“Although there has been significant progress, it is still not enough to support widespread application in service or human-interaction scenarios,” he said, pointing to continuing limitations in data accumulation, behavioural diversity and real-world training.

In many cases, robots still require human

✔ A humanoid robot is trained to pick tea leaves in Hangzhou



intervention or must operate in tightly controlled environments. As a result, initial adoption is likely to occur in settings where tasks are clearly defined and easier to manage.

“The earliest adoption will likely take place in environments with lower human traffic, such as factories, logistics operations, or tasks that people are unwilling to perform,” Prof. Hon said, citing cleaning, material handling and laboratory work as examples.

This emphasis on repeatable, task-specific functions is also shaping product development strategies. While humanoid robots are often associated with general-purpose capabilities, Prof. Hon says achieving that level of versatility remains a long-term ambition. “General-purpose robots require a very long development cycle, but specialised robots can enter the market more quickly.”

That shift is reflected in the evolution of

Singou Technology itself. While the company previously developed humanoid systems for security and exhibition use, it has increasingly moved towards narrower vertical applications. One example is a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) diagnostic robot capable of assessing patients through observation, listening, questioning and pulse analysis, while also recommending treatments and automatically preparing herbal drinks.

“This is a very specific application scenario,” Prof. Hon said, noting that such systems are easier to commercialise than general-purpose humanoid platforms.

## 302 million units

China’s projected humanoid robot population by 2050, the largest in the world, according to a forecast by Morgan Stanley

Prof. Hon also argues that advanced robotics is already far more widespread than many people realise. Autonomous driving technology, now common in many mass-produced vehicles, “is essentially a form of robotics”, he said, noting that systems capable of sensing, decision-making and execution are already operating at scale, even if they do not resemble humans.

In this context, Prof. Hon describes a broader shift towards what he called a “token economy”, in which labour is increasingly measured through computational resources. “When robots perform tasks,

what is being consumed is essentially computing power,” he said, suggesting that both physical robots and software systems form part of a wider transformation in how work is organised.

That shift, he added, is likely to reshape labour markets over time as automation expands across both physical and digital sectors. While some traditional jobs may diminish, new forms of work involving supervision, systems management and higher-level decision-making are also expected to emerge.

### **Robotics as an emerging tool**

Widely described in China as the “first year of mass production” for humanoid robots, 2025 marked a turning point for the industry. According to the country’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, more than 140 domestic manufacturers released over 330 humanoid robot models during the year.

As production scales up, costs have started to fall, making robots increasingly accessible to commercial users. Entry-level humanoid systems are now typically priced from a few thousand U.S. dollars, also allowing for short-term leasing and deployment in sectors such as exhibitions and events,

where interaction and novelty remain key attractions.

In Macao, event organisers have begun experimenting with humanoid robotics in audience engagement and live entertainment settings, according to Kelvin Che Sio Wang, vice-chairman of the Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition & Tourism Sectors.

“In some recent events, robots have been used as hosts or interactive performers,” Mr Che told Macao Magazine, adding that such applications are mainly intended to create novelty and attract public attention rather than replace human workers.

He said non-humanoid robots have also been deployed in more functional but still limited roles, including guiding visitors, performing basic navigation tasks and supporting exhibition displays. At events such as the Macao International Trade & Investment Fair (MIF), coffee-making and bartending robots have been introduced as promotional or trial applications designed around clearly defined tasks.

“At this stage, they are still mainly used to create interaction or a sense of novelty,” Mr Che said, adding that concerns around cost, stability and operational reliability continue to shape adoption decisions. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY

# CHAN HIN IO SHINES A LIGHT ON

Text **Victoria Man Sok Wa**



📍 Photographer Chan Hin Io in his studio on Beco dos Faiões

# MACAO'S PAST AND PRESENT



© CHEUNG MAN-MA

For more than 20 years, photographer **Chan Hin Io** has walked the streets of Macao, building one of the city's most extensive visual records of change, nostalgia and continuity

**T**he relationship between veteran freelance photographer Chan Hin Io and Macao is, in many ways, a story shaped by chance and devotion. Since the city's return to the motherland in 1999, he has meticulously documented its transformation, creating an enduring visual archive of a place balancing heritage and renewal.

He is more than a photographer. He is a visual chronicler, librarian of the Macau Imagery Gallery at the Macau University of Science and Technology, columnist and contemporary artist, whose work has been exhibited internationally, from Portugal to Australia. His photographs are held in the collections of the Macao

Museum of Art, the Archives of Macao and the Macao Foundation, reinforcing his role as one of the city's foremost visual storytellers.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau has organised several exhibitions of his work and published photo albums under his name. Among his dozen-plus published works are "Where the World Heritage Shines – Photographs of the Historic Centre of Macao", "Picturesque Beauty of the Land – Aerial Photos of Macao by Chan Hin Io", "Memories of the Old Crafts and Trades in Macao: A Photographic Recollection", and "Reflection of Macao – Documentary Photographs by Chan Hin Io". He has also received numerous photography awards.

Since moving to Macao in 1999, Mr Chan has devoted himself to recording the city's evolving urban and cultural identity. His images carry not only artistic significance, but also historical and social weight, preserving the fading rhythms of old neighbourhoods and

traditional trades for future generations.

Circumstance played a defining role in bringing him to Macao. Born in Zhongshan, around 40 kilometres north of Macao, in 1964, he left school early and trained in reinforcement engineering. His life changed

unexpectedly in 1990, when a brief stay in Macao enabled him to obtain a local resident identity card. Six years later, while still in Zhongshan, he bought his first camera.

**Photography with a purpose**

By the late 1990s, Mr Chan felt he had reached a dead end in construction work. At the same time, Macao was approaching a profound political transition with its return to the motherland. He saw in the city not only an opportunity to earn a living, but also a place suited to launch himself into photography.

“If it wasn’t for photography, I definitely wouldn’t have come to Macao,” Mr Chan told Macao Magazine in an interview. “Photography’s most vital function is to record – to capture society and history.”

In 1999, he was still relatively new to the craft. “I bought my first camera in the summer of 1996, and it wasn’t until 1997 that I truly figured out how to use it.”

Yet Macao gave him a reason to commit fully. “Since I was already devoted to photography, I thought this was the perfect place to settle down and focus on my work. To have a passion that contributes to society and leaves a mark on a place – to me, that’s incredibly meaningful.”

Photographs featured in the album “Reflection of Macao – Documentary Photographs by Chan Hin lo”, published by the Cultural Affairs Bureau in 2018

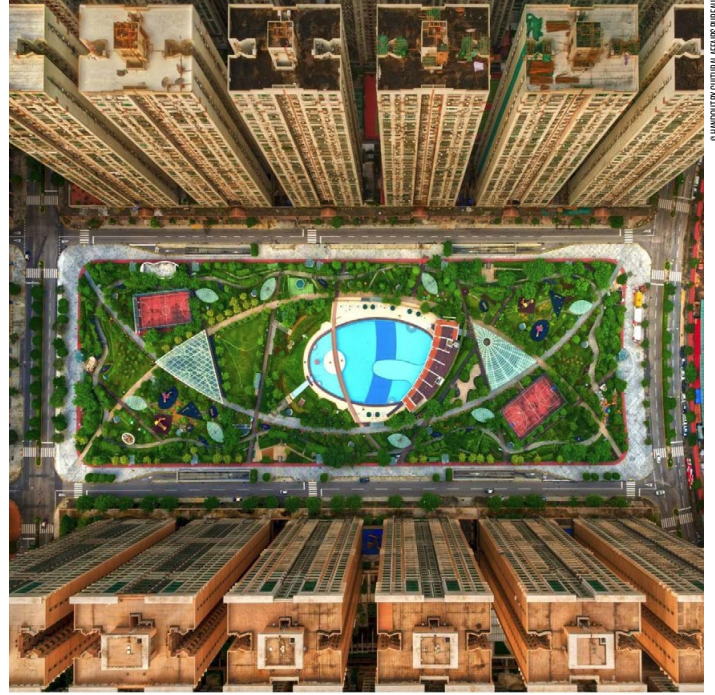
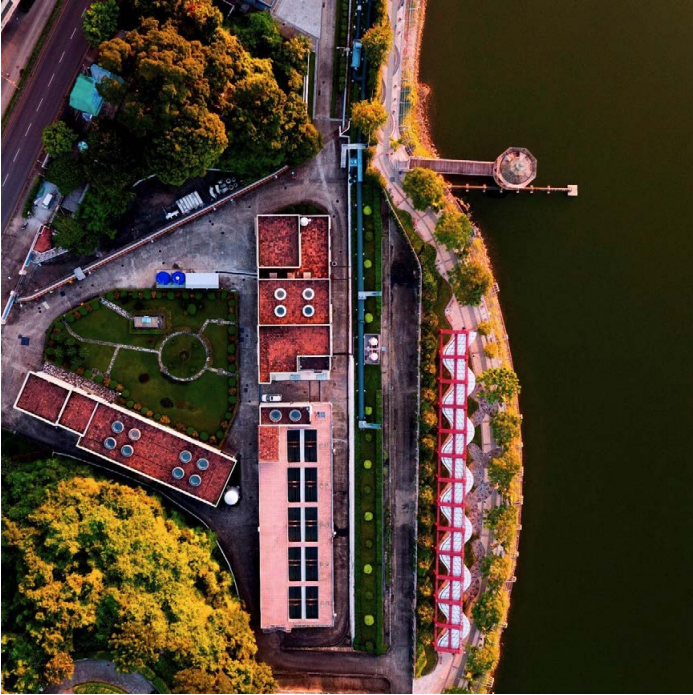


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✓ Aerial photography has been one of the focuses of Chan Hin lo's work



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“In a nutshell, I approach my work as a way of documenting Macao with a humanitarian eye.”

### **Humble beginnings**

Mr Chan did not arrive in Macao without responsibilities. Supporting a family meant photography also had to provide an income. “It was also a way to make a living,” he said.

In his early years in the city, he entered photography competitions for prize money, accepted commercial commissions and collaborated with various organisations. “There’s nothing wrong with earning a living through art,” he said. “As long as you’re honest,

how you earn your keep is perfectly justifiable.”

Making a career as a full-time photographer was not easy, but Mr Chan persevered. His grounded outlook enabled him to connect with residents and everyday life, giving his work a sense of intimacy and authenticity.

Still today, each morning begins with a ritual: reading newspapers to follow local affairs and social changes. Even small, classified advertisements, he believes, can reveal subtle shifts in the city’s rhythm. That instinct for observing change has shaped his understanding of where Macao is heading.

He has also worked to broaden his skills. “A

photographer should strive to develop well-rounded abilities,” he said. Writing, once a weakness, became increasingly important through his role at the Macao Imagery Gallery.

His curiosity extends beyond photography itself. Through newspaper columns, he transforms visual records into written narratives, believing photographs gain greater meaning when paired with context. As librarian of the Macao Imagery Gallery, he collaborates closely with historians and researchers to ensure the archive is not only visually compelling but also historically precise.

Despite an impressive résumé, Mr Chan remains

notably humble. “I understand the mindset of ordinary people because I come from a grassroots background myself.”

That humility has granted him access to spaces often overlooked: the back rooms of traditional shops, courtyard homes and private workshops. One of his landmark projects, “Neighbourhood”, documents the daily lives of residents, the streets and alleyways of old districts, and the traditional shops and vendors that continue to shape community life. The series captures the warmth and interconnectedness of neighbourhood relationships.

Mr Chan himself has spent years living and working in Macao’s older quarters – first in Pátio da Eterna Felicidade and now in Beco dos Fatiões.

### **A city of contrasts**

Part of what makes Mr Chan’s work so compelling is its continuity. For nearly two decades, he has returned repeatedly to the same streets, shops and individuals, documenting the passage of time. “When I look back at the photos I took 17 years ago, I realise they’ve become even more meaningful,” he said.

“Macao is captivating because it never stops changing. When photographs capture people’s attention

and spark discussion, they also create value. That cycle of change and response is what keeps my work alive.”

One central thread in his photography is Macao’s economic and urban evolution. From film cameras and helicopter photography to digital equipment and drones, Mr Chan has embraced every available tool to record the city’s growth. By photographing the same locations over more than two decades, he reveals land reclamation, changing skylines and evolving architecture with both artistic depth and documentary precision.

Yet beyond the large-scale developments, he remains fascinated by what he calls Macao’s “invisible history” – the customs, rituals and ordinary moments that quietly define its identity.

“By recording the same locations and people, we see how environments develop while people grow older,” he said. “Documenting them for decades brings a sense of melancholy, because the emotions tied to human change are very different from those tied to the changing cityscape.”

Audiences are often drawn to the contrasts embedded in his images: old and new,

*I approach my work as a way of documenting Macao with a humanitarian eye*

**Chan Hin Io**  
Photographer





East and West, sacred and secular. These juxtapositions arise naturally from Macao itself, according to him.

“When photographing festivals or churches, the collision of cultures is so striking you simply have to capture it,” he said. “Living in Macao, such moments present themselves every day.”

### Preserving authenticity

Mr Chan’s work has long extended beyond the city’s boundaries and the conventions of traditional documentary photography. One of his most visible international collaborations is “YiiMa” (“The Twins” in Cantonese), a creative partnership with Macao artist Ung Vai Meng. Together, they combine photography with performance, installation, video and archival art, pushing documentary work into more experimental territory while exploring Macao’s past, present and future. Their projects have been exhibited in Lisbon, Portugal, at the Venice Biennale in Italy, and at Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale.

Mr Chan has also explored new artistic forms independently. For Art Macao 2023, he created the photographic installation “Abnormal Structure”, which has since entered the collection of the



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Chan is one half of “YiiMa”, a creative partnership with Macao artist Ung Vai Meng (“Orange Scene”, YiiMa, 2021)

Cultural Affairs Bureau.

He sees the future of photography in Macao as a growing tree: rooted in documentary tradition, while branching into new technologies and artistic approaches. As digital tools become increasingly accessible, he believes more people will be able to document the city around them. But technology alone, he argues, is not enough.

“A beautiful image can be superficial. What matters is the story behind it,” he said.

For Mr Chan, documentary photography carries a responsibility: to celebrate progress while remaining willing to discuss it, ensuring an honest record for future generations. As librarian of the Macao Imagery Gallery, he now mentors younger photographers, reminding them that although technology evolves – from darkrooms to digital sensors and artificial intelligence (AI) – the fundamentals remain unchanged: presence, humility and curiosity. ■

## CINEMA

# FINDING MACAO THROUGH A LOST VIOLIN

Text **Margarida Vidinha**

Can a lost violin artwork help propel Macao's film industry onto the international stage? Local director **Max Bessmertny** is hoping his debut feature, "The Violin Case", might do exactly that

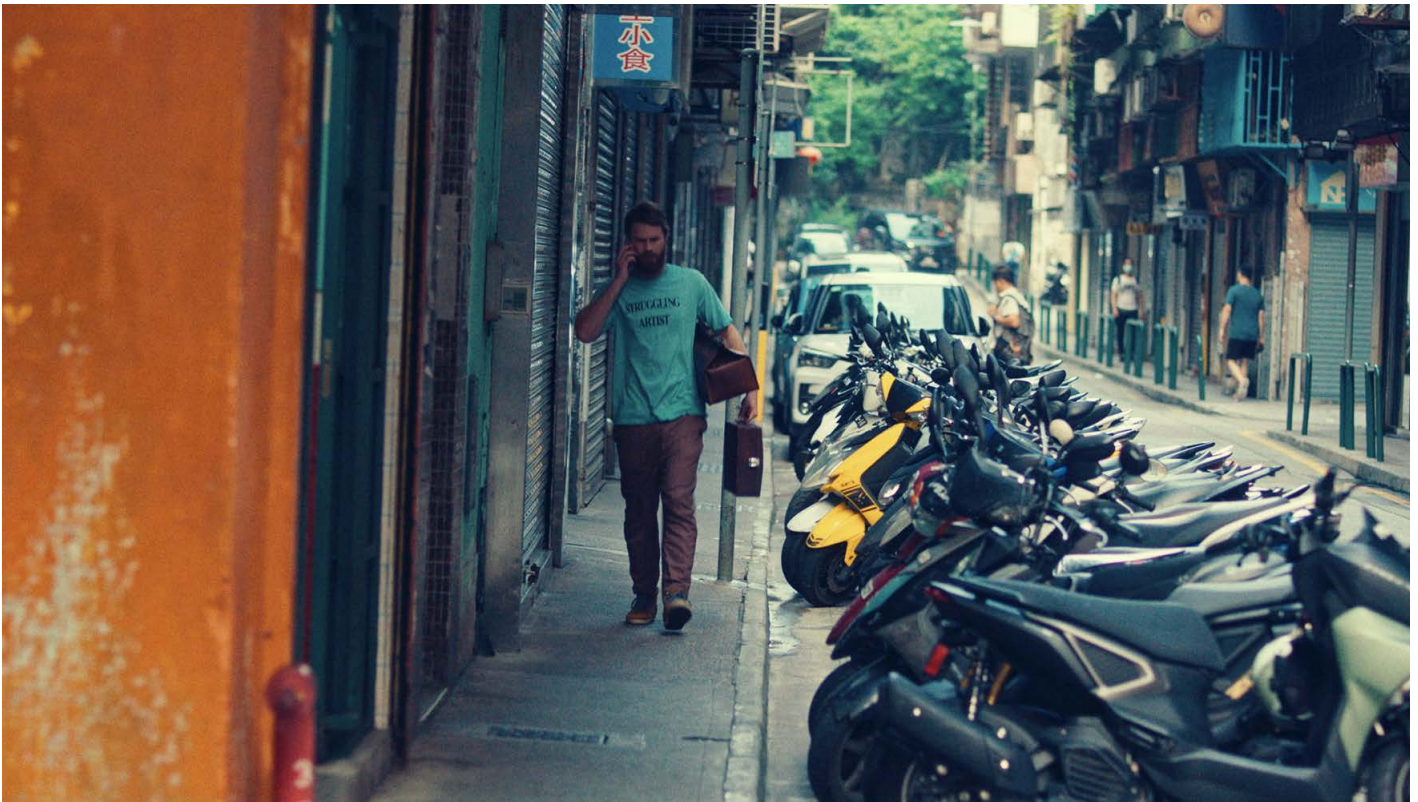
**F**or "The Violin Case" director Max Bessmertny and producer Virginia Ho, the journey to the big screen has been just as adventurous as the disappearance of the violin at the heart of the film. Six years after development began, the 87-minute feature premiered in Macao on May 15 ahead of a limited local release on May 22. Now, the pair are looking far beyond the city's borders, with a European premiere scheduled in Portugal on September 11.

"It's been a long journey, and now it feels like the pinnacle of all possible pinnacles," Mr Bessmertny told Macao Magazine.

The next challenge is ensuring "The Violin Case" secures a place in the international market. Last year alone, with support from Macao's Cultural Development Fund, the team presented the production at 10 film markets and festivals, including some of the industry's largest events – the Hong Kong International

Film & TV Market, the Shanghai International Film & TV Market, the Tokyo International Film Festival Content Market and the Cannes Film Market.

Ms Ho acknowledges that placing an independent film on the global circuit is demanding. Promotional materials, festival submissions and meetings with buyers all require months of preparation. "From a business perspective, it's a product," she said.



Scene from "The Violin Case"

Drawing on more than two decades in the industry, Ms Ho describes film markets as essential for independent productions seeking distribution.

"Going to a film market is like going to a regular market," she said. "We try to figure out what's going on, what we can offer, and what we can buy."

### **Multicultural production**

With its multilingual script and multicultural cast, "The Violin Case" attempts to capture what Mr Bessmertny sees as the essence of Macao: a city shaped by overlapping cultures, contradictions and encounters. English

serves as the film's primary language, though Cantonese, Portuguese, French and Tagalog are also spoken throughout.

The screenplay was co-written by Mr Bessmertny, Ms Ho and Jorge Cordeiro dos Santos. Its origins lie in a real-life incident involving Mr Bessmertny's father, Macao-based Russian artist Konstantin Bessmertny, who lost a painted violin in Hong Kong more than a decade ago. The artwork was never recovered, but the incident became the foundation for the film.

In "The Violin Case", the missing violin becomes a metaphor for the fragility

of art and the elusive value attached to it.

The story follows Theo, an American painter searching desperately for a discarded violin painted with Napoleon on both sides he left in the back of a taxi. The disappearance pushes the struggling young artist into financial and artistic crisis while he is pursued by calculating gallery owner Pauline. As Theo races through Macao's streets in search of his artwork, he is introduced to the city's bohemian undercurrent. But as the night deepens, so too does his descent.

For Mr Bessmertny, filming Macao is deeply

personal. His family moved to the city in 1992, when he was four years old, and its streets and rhythms have long shaped his work.

After studying at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, he developed a filmmaking style that blends the technical discipline of American cinema with surreal and unpredictable storytelling. His earlier short films – including debut production “Tricycle Thief” (2014), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, alongside “Death of a Parrot” (2015) and “Dirty Laundry” (2020) – already hinted at his fascination with absurdist narratives and urban eccentricity.

In “The Violin Case”, however, Macao moves

beyond backdrop and becomes central to the story itself. “It’s the nuances of East and West, the harmony of so many cultures living side by side in just 33 square kilometres,” Mr Bessmertny said.

That is also why he insists the film should be experienced in cinemas. “Some films are meant specifically for the cinema, and this is one of them,” he said.

The soundtrack was composed by António Vale da Conceição, a Macao-born musician and producer now based in Portugal. As a member of the Macao rock trio Turtle Giant, he saw the band’s 2012 EP “All Hidden Places” featured in the 2015 Sundance film “Ten Thousand

Saints”. Mr Conceição has since produced soundtracks for a range of multimedia projects.

The original soundtrack for “The Violin Case” – featuring songs such as “The Taxi Ride”, “Napoleon on the Beach”, and “The Flying Robber” – is now available on major streaming platforms.

### From Macao, in Macao, about Macao

Filming the production required 42 locations across 24 nights – a process Ms Ho says was just “as exhilarating as it was gruelling”.

Her experience proved essential. The founder of Macao-based Tentonine Productions Ltd, Ms Ho has previously worked on projects ranging from an award-winning documentary about the construction of The Venetian Macao resort to television commercials featuring big names such as English football star David Beckham, French actress Sophie Marceau and Philippine boxing great Manny Pacquiao. She also provided production services for international films shot in the city, including Marvel Studios’ 2021 blockbuster “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings”.

From its earliest script drafts to its premiere in May, “The Violin Case” took six years to complete, spanning fundraising,



▶ The film premiered in Macao on May 15, followed by a limited local release on May 22

filming and post-production. Mr Bessmertny recalls the challenge of maintaining creative focus over such an extended period, while Ms Ho points to the financial demands and emotional strain of sustaining an independent production as key reasons behind the lengthy process. The film's 4.5-million Hong Kong dollar budget was secured through private financing.

Casting was guided by a principle: reflecting the diversity of Macao itself. Macao-based Kelsey Wilhelm, a longtime collaborator of Mr Bessmertny, was cast as Theo, while several supporting roles went to

other local non-professional actors, including singer Filipe Baptista Tou, who plays a taxi driver.

The COVID-19 pandemic complicated auditions, forcing much of the casting process online. Even so, the team remained determined to preserve the city's linguistic and cultural texture.

Mr Bessmertny recalls a moment in the film in which an elderly local man speaks to Theo in hesitant English on a public bus. "It's one of my favourite scenes. It comes from observation and living in Macao."

For Ms Ho, the film represents more than a creative achievement. It is also evidence that Macao's film industry can produce internationally viable work without sacrificing its identity.

"This is Macao," she said. "It has a multicultural cast and features multiple languages. That's what exists here."

Even as "The Violin Case" begins its theatrical run, Mr Bessmertny is already preparing his next project. Titled "Typhoon Heist", it draws inspiration from 1940s Hollywood cinema and French film noir, centring on a group trapped inside a hotel during a robbery as a typhoon sweeps through the city.

For now, however, the team



*It's been a long journey, and now it feels like the pinnacle of all possible pinnacles*

**Max Bessmertny**  
Director of "The Violin Case"

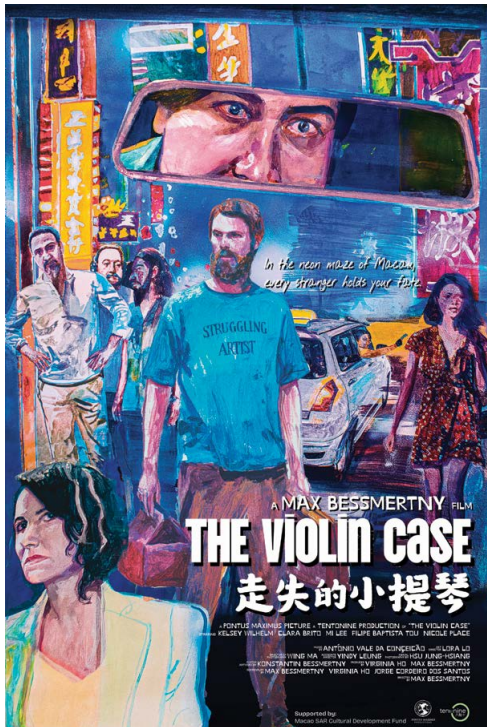
is focused on the reception to their debut feature at home. "This is our starting point, and it will always be our home," Ms Ho said. "We want to make films from Macao, in Macao, about Macao."

Reflecting on the production journey, Mr Bessmertny reduces the experience to four words: perseverance, team, trust and gratitude.

"First, never give up. Second, surround yourself with extraordinary people. Third, trust – because trust is essential. And finally, gratitude, because I am deeply grateful for what I do," he said.

For the filmmaker, the city remains an endless source of material and inspiration. "It's a gift that never stops giving." ■

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**SPORTS**





TRADITION

# RACING TO THE BEAT OF THE DRUM

Text **Marco Carvalho**

As the city prepares for the **2026 Macao International Dragon Boat Races**, the sound of drums once again echoes across Nam Van Lake. Beyond the competition, the centuries-old tradition continues to unite generations of paddlers through endurance, discipline and team spirit

**T**hump, thump, thump, thump, thump. The rhythmic pounding echoes across Nam Van Lake on a late April afternoon. A promise of rain looms over the city, heavy clouds slowly gathering above the buildings. The air is thick, heavy with humidity, but on Nam Van Lake, a paddling squad in a sleek, colourful vessel seems unconcerned by the brewing storm. Over the past two decades, the crew of Dragão em Liberdade de Macau has been part of a time-honoured tradition, one that combines intense physical activity, precise synchronisation and rich cultural heritage. The paddlers, as many as 20 per boat, drive the vessel forward in perfect harmony, each stroke a testament to strength, discipline and unity.

The rhythmic thunder of drums will once again echo across Praia Grande as the 2026 Macao International Dragon Boat Races return to the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre. Over three days – 13, 14 and 19 June – crews will slice through the water in displays of precision, endurance and teamwork, celebrating one of China’s most cherished traditions.

At the heart of this display of coordination is the drum. Its deep, resonant beat reverberates across the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre like a collective heartbeat. Long and steady, the rhythm rises from the bow, where the drummer stands like a conductor, orchestrating the crew onward.

“Even though a race only lasts for one or two minutes, depending on the distance, during that time we can’t stop at all. A wrong or delayed movement, as tiny as it might be, can break the rhythm of the entire boat,” Rui Ribeiro, a long-time dragon-boat competitor, points out.

“We spend months preparing so that every paddler moves in unison, and synchronised with the drummer,” he adds. “The drummer sets the pace and the rest of the crew must respond instantly. Those at the back have to follow the front rowers and keep the same momentum, so that we can be perfectly synchronised. The drum is the lifeblood of the boat.”

A familiar name on the starting line of the Macao International Dragon Boat Races for more than two decades, Dragão em Liberdade de Macau continues to embody the spirit of one of China’s most iconic traditional sports. Founded in 2004 by a group of enthusiasts, the team was created with the aim of preserving dragon boat racing as an important expression of cultural identity.

“The association was founded 22 years ago with the purpose of promoting the traditions and customs associated with the Dragon Boat Festival, while also encouraging senior athletes to remain active and healthy,” team captain Chan Ho Keong recalls. “At the same time, we also hope to introduce dragon boat racing to younger generations and strengthen interest in the sport among local youth.”

### **Strength in every beat**

By late spring, the sound of drums once again becomes part of the Praia Grande waterfront. While the races usually take place in late May or early summer, teams begin their preparations months in advance. On-water training usually starts around three months before the event, once Nam Van Lake opens for practice. Sessions last approximately 90 minutes and combine warm-ups, endurance work and explosive power training.

“We need strength to accelerate the boat at the start and explosive power when approaching the finish line, to be able to overtake the other teams,” Mr Chan explains, adding that synchronisation “is equally important”.

“As we have a crew that combines newcomers and experienced paddlers, at the start of the training season, beginners learn rowing techniques in stationary boats so they can improve posture and coordination before going onto the water,” he adds.

Calling for a blend of balance, coordination, endurance and raw strength, dragon boat racing stands out as an exceptionally demanding sport, Mr Ribeiro argues. A dedicated multi-sport athlete who competes



👉 Dragão em Liberdade de Macau has taken part in racing events for more than two decades

in marathons and triathlons, the 51-year-old says dragon boat racing is the most demanding discipline he has practiced, as it requires full-body strength – legs, back, core and arms – along with high cardiovascular endurance and strong mental resilience.

“I consider myself a sportsman and I enjoy challenges, but dragon boat racing is the most difficult sport I have encountered so far,” he says. “Mental endurance is especially important. The longest race in Macao is 500 metres, but once we reach the last 200 metres, we start to feel the strain. The entire body is exhausted, and it is mental resilience that helps the team push.”

### **The dragon doesn't roar alone**

Demanding as it may be, dragon boat racing gave Natasha Fellini a rare sense of belonging. When she arrived in Macao in

2001 from Brazil, Ms Fellini was unprepared for the sight of an ornate, slender vessel slicing through the water, powered by up to 20 paddlers moving as one. A lifelong lover of aquatic sports, Ms Fellini joined the local regattas once and never looked back.

“I had never seen a sport practiced this way,” the Brazilian teacher recalls. “There’s also a strong cultural dimension to dragon boat racing. It has a very ceremonial beginning, and that fascinated me.

“We all sacrifice personal time to prepare for the regattas, but it is always rewarding. It helps us relax and disconnect from the pressures of daily life,” she adds.

Lisa Hao, a fellow paddler at Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar, began her journey earlier, but took longer to flourish. As a secondary school student, she would watch the boats crossing Nam Van Lake, captivated

by their speed and grace. After studying in Portugal and later returning to Macao to teach, she eventually joined Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar and found a strong sense of community within the team.

“One strong person does not move the boat. Twenty people rowing together do,” Ms Hao says. “Team spirit is essential in dragon boat racing.”

“It takes months for a crew to develop proper timing and coordination. We only manage to do it in perfect harmony when we get close to the competition. Only by then, do we begin to understand which techniques we should use so that we can row in unison,” she adds. “Dragon boat racing is not like canoeing or other sports, because individual strength alone is never enough.”

For both women, the decision to embrace dragon boat racing over more conventional sports was almost instinctive. The appeal goes beyond physical exercise. The unique combination of athletic intensity,

cultural tradition and collective spirit is what continues to set the sport apart.

First organised in 1979, Macao’s dragon boat races are now considered a central part of the city’s Tuen Ng Festival celebrations, a centuries-old tradition linked to the poet and statesman Qu Yuan, who is said to have drowned himself in protest against political corruption and exile. Increasingly popular, the Macao International Dragon Boat Races are now among the city’s largest annual sporting events.

“Nowadays, the races have become a major annual sporting event spanning three days,” the Sports Bureau told Macao Magazine. “Local organisations, associations and government departments compete during the first two days, while the Tuen Ng Festival holiday features the Macao International Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race and the Macao University Student Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race.”

The event also showcases cultural performances and a dragon boat-themed



▲ Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar during a practice session at Nam Van Lake



© MARCO CERVALDO

◀ Leung Sio Teng (left), team captain at Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar, with Natasha Fellini (centre) and Lisa Hao (right)

carnival featuring local creative products, food stalls and interactive activities, the bureau notes.

### Shaping lives, empowering the future

Beyond personal fulfilment, dragon boat racing carries deep significance for generations of local residents. Established in the late 1980s, Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar has been a consistent presence in Macao’s flagship regattas for more than two decades. The multi-sport association also played a foundational role in the creation of the Dragon Boat Association of Macao, China.

Apart from dragon boat racing, Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar also promotes canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding and canoe polo, disciplines that help preserve a connection to the sea while offering young people structure, mentorship and purpose.

“When I saw the challenges young people face today, I decided to return from retirement because I believe sport can help them integrate into society,” coach Sam Siu Heng says. “Young people today spend so much time online and staring at screens that many struggle with social interaction. Through sport, we hope to help them build confidence, discipline and

stronger connections with others,” he explains.

With a strong emphasis on youth development, the team has also become an example of intercultural harmony. With around 70 members enrolled and a dedicated core of 20 to 30 paddlers, Clube de Canoagem Baía do Mar functions as a genuine family. Newcomers and veterans, locals and expatriates – Chinese, Portuguese, Macanese, Russians and Brazilians – row side by side, united by teamwork and mutual support.

“It’s undoubtedly a large family,” Ms Fellini notes. “There are always one or two people asking who wants to go for a run after practice. We genuinely support one another.”

She adds: “Over the years, we have built very strong friendships and emotional bonds. We take care of one another, and that is what makes the experience so meaningful.”

The 2026 Macao International Dragon Boat Races will feature elite teams from the Chinese mainland and overseas alongside local crews. But beyond the competition itself, the races will remain a celebration of endurance, tradition and collective spirit, values that continue to resonate in Macao, both on and off the water. ■

# In the name of A-Ma

Photo feature by Leong Sio Po









The beliefs and customs of A-Ma, which are deeply rooted in the city's maritime past, were inscribed on China's national intangible cultural heritage list in 2014. The Chinese Opera Association of Terrestrial and Maritime Dwellers of Barra has also been officially designated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as the guardian of these traditions in Macao. Each year, the association organises the **A-Ma Festival**: this cultural celebration takes place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the third month of the Chinese lunar calendar, which fell on May 9 this year. The five-day festival features Chinese opera performances dedicated to various deities staged within a purpose-built bamboo theatre on the square outside the A-Ma Temple in Barra. A grand banquet is also held as a tribute to A-Ma, known as the Goddess of Seafarers.



## BRICK &amp; STORY

# A CULTURAL LANDMARK WHERE

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

Tucked within the leafy calm of Saint Augustine's Square, the **Sir Robert Ho Tung Library** is one of Macao's most treasured cultural landmarks, a quiet sanctuary where history, architecture and literature come together beneath the shade of centuries-old trees

**T**he Sir Robert Ho Tung Library offers a rare sense of stillness. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage landmark within the Historic Centre of Macao in 2005, the library has served as a place of learning, reflection and cultural exchange for generations of residents and visitors alike.

Quietly removed from the bustle of the city centre, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library occupies an elegant 19<sup>th</sup>-century mansion distinguished by its pale-yellow façade, arched windows and neoclassical lines. Surrounded by shaded courtyards and terraced gardens, the building combines architectural grace with an atmosphere of tranquillity rarely found in an urban setting.

The Sir Robert Ho Tung Library remains one of the largest and most historically significant branches in the Macao Public Library network. The complex includes both the original mansion and a contemporary extension that carefully complements the historic structure while preserving its intimate character.

Behind the old building, a peaceful garden invites readers outdoors beneath the shade of mature trees, including a

175-year-old hackberry. Benches scattered throughout the grounds provide quiet corners for reading, accompanied only by birdsong and the rustling of leaves.

According to the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the library occupies a unique place in Macao's cultural landscape.

"Visitors will not only appreciate the beauty of this architectural building, but also experience its unique cultural atmosphere. As a World Heritage site, this garden-style library is more than a cultural treasure. Importantly, it is a cultural space for people to access and experience," the bureau told Macao Magazine.

Beyond its serene setting, the library is also home to one of Macao's most valuable collections of rare Chinese texts. With seating for more than 400 readers and capacity for over 100,000 volumes, the venue houses nearly 5,000 rare ancient works and manuscripts in its Chinese Ancient Books Chamber.

Among the most significant treasures is the "Manuscript Draft of the Siku Quanshu Synopsis" by Qing scholar Weng Fanggang. The collection also includes early Chinese translations of Western religious and literary



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# KNOWLEDGE BLOSSOMS

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The Sir Robert Ho Tung Library is home to one of Macao's most valuable collections of rare Chinese texts [↗](#)

works, offering insight into the historical exchange between China and the West.

“The library includes religious books such as *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, translated into Chinese during the Ming and Qing dynasties, which recorded the dissemination of Western culture in China. These rare books not only reflect the profound essence of Chinese culture, but also showcase the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures,” the Cultural Affairs Bureau noted.

### A lasting legacy

The mansion that now houses the library was built before 1894 as the residence of Dona Carolina Antónia da Cunha, widow of former Governor Pedro Alexandrino da Cunha.

In 1918, prominent businessman and philanthropist Sir Robert Ho Tung purchased the property for 16,000 patacas, transforming it into a summer residence. During the Second World War, after Hong Kong fell to Japanese forces, Sir Ho Tung and his family sought refuge in Macao, where they remained for the duration of the conflict.

To fulfil his vision of promoting cultural access for the local community, Sir Ho Tung donated his former residence to the authorities and requested that it be converted into a library dedicated to Chinese books. Upon his death in April 1956, the authorities honoured his wishes. The Sir Robert Ho Tung

Library officially opened on August 1, 1958.

What began as a modest collection of approximately 3,000 books gradually evolved into one of Macao’s most cherished cultural institutions. Over the decades, the library has welcomed students, researchers, families and curious visitors. Within its reading rooms and gardens, generations of readers have discovered literature, explored Macao’s history and studied rare manuscripts from the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The library entered a new phase in the early 2000s, when the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government launched an ambitious expansion and restoration project. With an investment of approximately 10 million patacas, the project aimed to modernise the facilities while preserving the site’s historic identity.

Architect Joy Choi Tin Tin was commissioned to design the extension. “The new building, of course, is next to the UNESCO-listed building,” she recalled. “There was also the surrounding environment. We had to launch a thorough investigation to devise which possibilities [would be best] to expand the library. [While] that was the [main] purpose, we were also keen on keeping the historical features there. Ever since the beginning, our intention was to enhance the old building, while creating a new space and a new



▲ The library is part of the Historic Centre of Macao, a UNESCO World Heritage site



*Our intention was to enhance the old building, but also to create a new space and a new architectural legacy*

**Joy Choi**

Architect responsible for the extension of the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library

architectural legacy. The way we approached the design is deeply connected to Macao.”

### **Whispers of light and stone**

Completed in 2006, the modern extension rises discreetly behind the historic mansion, expanding the library’s capacity while maintaining the intimacy and serenity of the original site.

Rather than imitating the old structure, Ms Choi deliberately embraced contrast.

“In the beginning, we believed that the design should be harmonised with the original building. Nevertheless, I ended up conceiving the building in a contrasting way,” she explained. “You may find there are many yin-yang sorts of contrasts. We have Western and Chinese influences, but also different approaches to the way space is used. There’s an atrium, for instance, and our basement floor is very Chinese.”

Inspired in part by Lingnan architectural traditions, the extension incorporates open circulation areas, an atrium and carefully layered spaces that encourage natural light and ventilation.

More than tripling the library’s original floor area, the project expanded the total built space to approximately 3,195 square metres.

Glass, steel and stone create a contemporary counterpoint to the solid masonry of the 19th-century mansion, establishing a dialogue between heritage and modernity.

“My aim was always to preserve as much as possible the existing historical building,” Ms Choi said. “We decided to separate old and new and to enhance the old building, by conceiving something new. We left a considerable space between both buildings and used glass and metal, which are very light materials, so that the new expansion could stand in striking contrast with the original materials of the old building. This was a purposeful choice.”

She said there were significant challenges throughout the construction process as well.

“Since the historic library building could not be disturbed, access to the construction site had to be negotiated through the neighbouring Seminary of Saint Joseph,” the architect noted. “We had to create temporary structures for deliveries and construction access. Workers, materials and heavy equipment all had to enter through the neighbouring site.”

To this day, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library stands as both a monument to Macao’s layered history and a living cultural space that continues to evolve with the city. ■

# Drawing inspiration from within in Macao

Text **Rui Pastorin**

Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

## Name

**Alice Kok Tim Hei**

## Age

**47**

## Title

**President at  
Art For All Society (AFA)**

## Place of birth

**Macao**

## Macao in one word

**Multicultural**

## What got you into art in the first place?

I've loved drawing since I was a kid. Anything visual or aesthetic just clicked with me. When I was around seven or eight years old, I already told my mother that I wanted to be an artist. In high school, I got into photography through my dad; I borrowed his camera and taught myself. That became my main medium, and later I moved into video art.

## How did you become a curator?

It began while I was studying in France. After earning my master's, I interned at a European art association, where I organised and reviewed artists' portfolios from across Europe. That experience gave me my first real taste of curating. When I returned to Macao nearly 20 years ago, the local art scene was growing and needed curators. Art For All Society (AFA) invited me to curate a solo show, and I've been doing it ever since.

## Has being a curator changed over the years?

A lot. When I first started, there weren't many curators, and people didn't even fully understand what the role was. Now it's much more professional, and there are a lot of independent curators – especially younger ones – doing really great work.

## Where do you usually get your inspiration from?

A lot of my inspiration comes from within – my spiritual practice, dreams, the subconscious, meditation. The mind is an endless source of ideas. There's always more to explore and is a resource that you can constantly tap into.

**What's something people often get wrong about creativity? Any advice?**

People often think creativity is about coming up with totally new ideas. It's not. It's about being real. When you fully feel something and express it honestly, it becomes unique. We all experience the same core emotions – life, illness, loss – but no one else can express them exactly the way you can if you are authentic and follow your emotions. So, instead of searching for something 'special' out there, look inward. The better you understand yourself, the more powerful your work will be.

**What's the art scene in Macao like right now?**

It's thriving. There are at least one or two exhibitions every week, which is kind of amazing. I think it's very vibrant nowadays and constantly evolving. There's also more collaboration with the hospitality industry, thanks to government policies connecting art with integrated resorts. That's opened a lot of new platforms and opportunities.

**Are there any Macao artists that people should be paying attention to right now?**

Leong Chi Mou. He's young, sharp, and has a great sense of wit. His work is deeply connected to Macao's culture, and his craftsmanship is strong. I worked with him on a two-year project in Belgium, and the work he recently showed at Art Central in Hong Kong came from that. I'm excited to see where he goes next.



**Festival**

# THE LAND OF LOTUS

Historically, Macao was known poetically as the “Land of the Lotus” – a nickname rooted in its earlier geography, when the peninsula was said to resemble a lotus bud, before decades of land reclamation transformed the coastline. Today, the white lotus serves as the emblem of the Macao Special Administrative Region. That symbolism comes into full bloom during the annual Macao Lotus Flower Festival, organised by the Municipal Affairs Bureau, when public spaces across the city are filled with potted lotus plants. In the Taipa Houses area, elaborate floral displays transform the heritage precinct into one of the festival’s focal points.

JUN 12 TO JUL 17 | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS | FREE ADMISSION



© CHENG WANG

**Arts**

# INSPIRING STAGE PRODUCTIONS

The 36<sup>th</sup> Macao Arts Festival, organised by the Cultural Affairs Bureau, is currently under way. Festival highlights include a reimagined production of the classic “Swan Lake” (pictured) by the Shanghai Ballet, presented in collaboration with British choreographer Derek Deane on June 19 and 20. Closing this year’s festival is “Her Dynasty” by The Nine Theatre from Beijing on June 25 and 27. Performed in Mandarin, with Chinese and English surtitles, the production revisits the life of Chinese empress Wu Zetian. For the full programme and ticketing details, please visit the festival’s official website.

NOW THROUGH JUN 27 | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS  
 | WWW.ICM.GOV.MO/FAM



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**Stamp collecting**

# TINY WINDOWS, BIG STORIES

Stamp collectors and philatelic enthusiasts from around the world are converging on Macao for the city’s first global stamp exhibition. The Macao 2026 Specialized World Stamp Exhibition will be jointly organised by the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau and the Macao Philatelic Association under the patronage of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie. The exhibition is expected to feature around 1,500 display frames and approximately 50 booths, bringing together exhibitors, collectors and industry representatives from across the globe.

JUN 26 TO JUL 1 | COTAI EXPO HALL A, THE VENETIAN MACAO |  
 FREE ADMISSION | WWW.MACAO2026.ORG.MO



© HANOI/STY

## Leisure

### WALK THE SOUTH SHORE

The second phase of the South Shore Waterfront Green Promenade, stretching between the Macao Tower and the Portas do Entendimento large-scale art installation, has officially opened to the public, adding a new recreational space along the city's waterfront. Stretching 17,000 square metres, the expanded promenade features waterfront walking and cycling paths, alongside extensive landscaped greenery. The new leisure area includes waterfront seating where visitors can relax while taking in views of the shoreline and the Sai Van Bridge.

DAILY | ENTER VIA PORTAS DO ENTENDIMENTO, THE FOOTBRIDGE IN AVENIDA PANORÂMICA DO LAGO SAI VAN, OR THE ZEBRA CROSSING NEXT TO THE CAR PARK UNDER SAI VAN BRIDGE | FREE ACCESS



© HANDOUT BY MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS/SGZAU

## Music

### A 'BLAZING' PERFORMANCE

British conductor Christopher Warren-Green takes the podium as the Macao Orchestra joins forces with acclaimed Uzbek pianist Behzod Abduraimov (pictured) for an evening of Romantic-era masterworks at the city's Cathedral. The concert, titled "The Blazing Keys", features Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's celebrated "Piano Concerto No. 1", widely regarded as one of the most powerful and recognisable works in the piano repertoire. The programme also includes the "Rhenish" Symphony by German composer Robert Schumann.

JUN 27 | 8PM | CATHEDRAL | MOP200



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## Fashion

### JEWELLERY, THE WESTWOOD WAY

Jewellery takes centre stage in this exhibition exploring the aesthetic legacy and lasting influence of British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood (1941-2022). As part of an international touring exhibition, the Vivienne Westwood & Jewellery Exhibition 2026 Macau brings together pieces that chart four decades of the Vivienne Westwood fashion house's archive and runway history, presented together as a collection for the first time.

NOW THROUGH JUL 15 | 11AM TO 8PM (LAST ADMISSION AT 7PM) | GRAND LISBOA PALACE RESORT MACAU | FREE ADMISSION (BOOKING IN ADVANCE REQUIRED) | ART.SJMRESORTS.COM



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## STONE SENTINELS

Macao's surviving historical fortresses stand as enduring reminders of the city's importance as a strategic port along the coast of southern China during the late Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Constructed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, these military structures formed part of a coastal defence system designed to repel invading

forces and combat piracy. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, additional strongholds were built, including on Taipa and Coloane.

Today, these fortresses have outlived their original military purpose, yet they remain deeply woven into Macao's urban and cultural landscape. The centuries-old structures offer a striking contrast between the city's past and present.

**Can you find these eight surviving Macao fortresses?**

**MONG HA (MONG-HA FORTRESS)**

**BOM PARTO**

**(BOM PARTO FORTRESS)**

**GUIA (GUIA FORTRESS)**

**MOUNT (MOUNT FORTRESS)**

**BARRA**

**(ST. TIAGO DA BARRA FORTRESS)**

**MARIA (D. MARIA II FORTRESS)**

**FRANCIS (ST. FRANCIS FORT)**

**TAIPA (TAIPA FORTRESS)**

(Words can go in any direction)

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



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Especializada, Macau 2026

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2026  
26.06

01.07



開放時間 / Horário de funcionamento / Opening Hours

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27-29/06/2026 > 10:00 - 19:00

30/06/2026 > 10:00 - 18:00

01/07/2026 > 10:00 - 16:00



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