

Sam visits Zhuhai, meets with CPC Zhuhai Municipal Committee Secretary Chen

Staff Reporter

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai is leading a delegation of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government on a two-day visit to three cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) – Zhuhai, Zhongshan, and Jiangmen, the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) said in a statement last night.

The working visit began yesterday.

Yesterday afternoon, the delegation departed for Zhuhai, where they met with Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhuhai Municipal Committee Secretary Chen Yong and Mayor Wu Zetong to exchange in-depth views on further strengthening cooperation and jointly advancing the second-phase development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

According to the GCS statement, Sam started the meeting by expressing his gratitude to the CPC Zhuhai Municipal Committee and Municipal Government for their strong support of the MSAR and the In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, providing crucial backing for Macau's appropriately diversified economic development.

Sam said he hopes that Zhuhai will continue to support the work of the new-term MSAR government. He also said that active participation in the development of the GBA and deeper integration into the nation's development framework are vital drivers for Macau to achieve appropriately diversified and sustainable economic growth.

Given the proximity of Macau and Zhuhai, the MSAR government places great importance on deepening practical cooperation with Zhuhai, and he hopes that both sides will continue to work together to advance Macau-Zhuhai collaboration and mutual development. In particular, Sam was quoted as saying, they should jointly focus on the development of Hengqin, striving to create a high-level open zone with Chinese characteristics that leverages the advantages of "Two Systems," and accelerate Macau-Hengqin integration.

Sam also noted that thanks to yesterday afternoon's visit, he was able to gain insight into Zhuhai's strengths in high-tech industries. The chief executive also said he hopes that Macau and Zhuhai in general, as well as Macau and Zhuhai's Hengqin island in particular, will enhance collaboration to promote the development of related industries. Additionally, Sam stressed, there is significant potential for Macau and Zhuhai to collaborate on international integrated cultural and tourism projects and the development of an international aviation hub.

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Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhuhai Municipal Committee Secretary Chen Yong (right) meets with Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai in Zhuhai yesterday. – Photo: GCS

Swiss fencers' refusal to face Israeli flag at ceremony sparks row

GENEVA – The Swiss Fencing Association apologised yesterday after the country's youth team sparked a diplomatic row by refusing to face the flag of the Israeli winners at the European championships in Estonia this weekend.

Following its defeat against Israel in the final of the under-23 Championships in Tallinn on Saturday, the four-man Swiss team did not join the Israelis and the third-placed Italians in turning towards the flags during the playing of the winner's national anthem.

The move, which was reportedly meant to send a political message related to the Middle East conflict, drew harsh criticism from Israel especially.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar

expressed outrage about the incident on X, posting a picture of the Swiss team members facing away from the two other teams on the medals podium.

"Shame on the Swiss team for their disrespectful behaviour," he wrote on Saturday, adding: "You don't know how to lose and behaved in a manner which is an embarrassment to you and the country you're supposed to represent."

The Swiss Fencing Association said in a statement yesterday that it had "no sympathy for the fact that its team misused the award ceremony for a political manifestation".

While noting that "our athletes congratulated the Israeli winners after the final", it stressed that "we deeply regret" that the team's behaviour at the

award ceremony "hurt the feelings of the Israeli delegation".

The association also lamented that the team's actions had "demeaned the sporting success of the Swiss team with three medals at this U23 European Championships".

It added: "In principle, Swiss Fencing is of the opinion that sporting competitions are not suitable for expressing political opinions, even if athletes are of course allowed to have their personal opinions on world events."

The association stressed that "after the athletes return from Estonia, Swiss Fencing will enter into discussions with the U23 team and then decide on any measures to be taken".

– AFP

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The Macau Post Daily

China unveils draft of its first-ever environmental code

China is poised for a significant enhancement in its green efforts as a draft of the country's first-ever environmental code was unveiled yesterday.

– Story on p. 7

Iranian president visits site of port blast that killed 40

Iran's president visited yesterday the scene of a massive port blast that killed 40 people and injured more than 1,000, as fires still blazed more than 24 hours after the explosion.

– Story on p. 11

Portugal's mourning for pope turns political

Thousands of demonstrators took part in a rally on Friday to mark Portugal's establishment of democracy, ignoring a government decision to postpone events to mourn the death of Pope Francis.

– Story on p. 12

Border crossers can pass Hengqin checkpoint without travel documents from October: Wong

Tony Wong

Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak says that eligible border crossers will be able to pass border controls at the Macau-mainland joint checkpoint on Zhuhai's Hengqin island without having to present travel documents when using e-channels where they will only have to pass fingerprint scans and facial recognition, adding that the new measure is expected to get off the ground in October.

Wong made the remarks during a one-day Q&A session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle on Friday about his portfolio's policy guidelines for this year.

Since November 20 last year, eligible border crossers have been able to pass e-channels at Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint without having to present travel documents where they are only required to pass fingerprint scans and facial recognition. The Gongbei checkpoint is currently the only mainland-Macau border checkpoint where this measure is implemented.

While the Hengqin checkpoint is a Macau-mainland joint checkpoint where border crossers are required to pass border controls only once, Gongbei is not a joint checkpoint, with its counterpart at the Macau side being the Barrier Gate checkpoint.

After border crossers en route to the mainland complete their departure formalities at Macau's Barrier Gate checkpoint, they are required to pass through an "in-between area" before entering Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint where they need to complete their arrival formalities.

Currently, three of Macau's land border checkpoints with Zhuhai are Macau-mainland joint checkpoints, where the "joint inspection and one-time release" system is operating, namely the Macau-Zhuhai checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB), the Hengqin checkpoint, and the Qingmao pedestrian border checkpoint.

The "joint inspection and one-time release" model is a joint Macau-mainland immigration clearance system adopted at Macau-mainland joint checkpoints where border crossers are required to pass border controls only once when completing their departure and arrival formalities.

Currently, when using the three Macau-mainland joint checkpoints' e-channels, border crossers are required to have their travel documents scanned first, after which they are required to pass fingerprint scans and facial recognition.

During Friday's Q&A session, Wong said that 46 additional

e-channels will be installed at the Hengqin checkpoint later this year, all of which will be equipped with the function enabling border crossers to pass border controls without having to present travel documents where they will only have to pass fingerprint scans and facial recognition. In addition, Wong said, all existing e-channels at the Hengqin checkpoint will be upgraded to also include the function later this year.

Wong added that tests are scheduled to be carried out for the newly installed and newly upgraded e-channels from July, before the newly installed e-channels with the new function are expected to start operating in October when the new function is also expected to become available at the newly upgraded e-channels.

Wong pointed out that both the Hengqin checkpoint and the Qingmao checkpoint are Macau-mainland joint checkpoints where the "joint inspection and one-time release" system is operating. Consequently, he said, after the successful implementation of the new function at the Hengqin checkpoint, Macau's immigration authorities and their mainland counterparts will jointly study the feasibility of also adopting the new function at the Qingmao checkpoint.



Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak addresses Friday's Q&A session about his portfolio's 2025 policy guidelines in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle.

— Photo courtesy of TDM

Phone & online fraud victims lose 232 million patacas last year

Meanwhile, Wong also underlined during Friday's Q&A session that alongside senior citizens, university students are another major segment of victims of telecom frauds.

Wong said that the total financial loss resulting from phone and online fraud cases reported in Macau last year amounted to 232 million patacas last year, a decrease from the 310 million patacas in 2023. He also said that the victims of phone and online fraud cases reported in Hong Kong and Singapore last year suffered financial losses equivalent to 9.4 billion patacas and 6.7 billion patacas in total respectively.

Wong also said that the phenomenon where many well-educated people who have been aware of the police forces' fraud prevention information are still being defrauded is worth studying.

Meanwhile, Wong also said that the new law criminalising illegal currency exchanges, which took effect in late October last year, has been very effective in bringing down such activities.

Wong also said that the local government will study the feasibility of amending the organisational structure of its Committee for Safeguarding National Security with the aim of expanding the scopes and aspects in the local government as well as in civil society to be covered by the safeguarding of national security. ■

Sam visits Zhuhai, meets with CPC Zhuhai Municipal Committee Secretary Chen

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Both sides should strengthen cooperation, align their development positioning, and complement each other's strengths to foster comprehensive industrial growth. Sam reaffirmed, according to the statement, that Macau, as a commercial and trade cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, has extensive connections with Portuguese-speaking nations and a global reach spanning four continents. Sam underlined that Zhuhai can further leverage this unique advantage to jointly attract foreign investment and enhance the Greater Bay Area's international competitiveness.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides.

Prior to the meeting, Sam and his delegation toured the Zhuhai

High-Tech Industrial Development Zone, visited a semiconductor technology company, attended a briefing on the current state of Zhuhai's semiconductor industry, and exchanged views on the development of artificial intelligence. The delegation then proceeded to the Zhuhai Grand Theatre to learn about its future plans and other cultural-tourism projects in Zhuhai.

Zhuhai ("Pearl Sea"), which abuts Macau, covers a land area of 1,724 square kilometres and has a population of 2.4 million.

Sam arrived in Zhongshan yesterday evening and will continue his visit to Zhongshan and Jiangmen today.

Sam was born in Zhongshan, about 40 km north of Macau, in 1962. ■

MITE promotes combining tourism & sports



2008 Olympics Team China gold medal gymnast Li Shanshan (centre), Macau's first-ever Asian Games gold medalist Jia Rui (right) and Macau's 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games men's karate silver medallist Kuok Kin Hang, attend yesterday afternoon's "Champion" session at Venetian Macau's Cotai Expo.

— Ida Cheong

Ida Cheong

The three-day 13th Macau International Travel (Industry) Expo (MITE), which ended at the Venetian Macau's Cotai Expo yesterday, featured a sports-themed session called "Champions".

Addressing yesterday's session, Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes noted that the 15th National Games will be held in November. As a co-host city, Macau will stage five competitions—table tennis, 3x3 basketball, men's U18 basketball, women's volleyball, and karate, showcasing, according to Senna Fernandes, Macau's capacity to deliver world-class events, apart from marking a historic first for

Macau, Guangdong and Hong Kong in the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Fernandes went on to say in her speech that Macau plans to sustain momentum by organising large-scale sporting events year-round, encouraging the combination of the tourism industry and sporting events.

Also addressing yesterday's session, Sports Bureau (ID) President Luis Gomes underlined that over 20 major sporting events are slated for this year, including marquee attractions like the Macau Grand Prix (MGP) and Macao International Marathon, blending spectating with sightseeing, creating an immersive experience that allows visitors to explore Macau's culture

while enjoying competitions.

Gomes emphasised that the integration between sport and tourism is not only an industry trend, but also a vital pathway to strengthen Macau's global footprint through deeper collaboration in the GBA, aiming to attract even more international events and expanding Macau's international image.

The session invited 2008 Olympics Team China gold medal gymnast Li Shanshan, Macau's first-ever Asian Games gold medalist Jia Rui and Macau's 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games men's karate silver medallist Kuok Kin Hang, to talk about their experiences and sports careers. ■

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

**MAINLY CLOUDY.
A FEW SHOWERS.
A FEW THUNDERSTORMS AT
FIRST.
FORCE 2 TO 3 SOUTHWESTERLY
WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
75% AND 98%.**



22°C~26°C

Source: SMG

4•23 World Book Day winners' creations go on display

Ida Cheong

To celebrate 4•23 World Book Day, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), in collaboration with public libraries across Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, hosted the 2025 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao "4•23 World Book Day Creative Competition."

The annual event's regional awards ceremony was held at the Macau Cultural Centre Plaza yesterday, honouring 65 students and presenting commemorative trophies to 22 winning schools.

The winners' creations for the "4•23 World Book Day Creative Competition" are being exhibited on the 2nd floor of the Macau Cultural Centre and will be part of a travelling exhibition in local

schools and public libraries from next month onwards, to show the winning students' creativity.

Themed "Reading—My Travel Companion," the competition received nearly 1,400 submissions from local students, according to a statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC). These included 350 artwork entries across primary school categories and 1,047 essays from upper primary, junior and senior high school categories.

At the ceremony, winners from the essay competition's junior high school categories took the stage to talk about their feelings.

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man; Department of Public Library Management Acting Director Tang

Mei Lin; Division of Reader Services and Promotion Director Lam Weng Na; Division for Developing Bibliographic Resources Acting Director Pun Ka Leng; Art Panel jury representative Ng Wai Kin; Essay Panel jury representative Tong Miu Siu; and many guests attended yesterday's event.

Ng said that this year's winning works are full of creativity and

childlike fun in terms of both the use of colours and composition. The content of the works shows the students' pure imagination and the happy experience in their reading journey, Ng added.

Tong commended the essay writers' winning works, praising the articles for their fluent writing style and sincere emotions, not only demonstrating the students' excellent

writing ability, but also making people feel the important impact of reading on students' philosophical enlightenment and growth.

The 2025 edition of "Reading Month in the City of Macao" started on April 23 – World Book Day – and will continue through May 22, the opening ceremony of which was held at Macau Cultural Centre Plaza in Nape on April 23. ■



The participants in the "4•23 World Book Day" awards ceremony pose for a group photo at Macau Cultural Centre Plaza yesterday afternoon, including Macau Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (front, 7th from left).

Participants and visitors walk around during the "4•23 World Book Day" awards ceremony inside the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM) yesterday afternoon. – Photo: Ida Cheong

Artyzen, IC2 Association celebrate 'World Earth Day'



Guests and Macau IC2 Association members perform during the "World Earth Day" yesterday afternoon at the outdoor lawn of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau in Nape, including Artyzen Grand Lapa Hotel chief Rutger Verschuren.

– Photo: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau and Macau IC2 Association jointly hosted the "World Earth Day" yesterday afternoon with the theme "From Pulp to Planet, Love Recycled".

IC2 stands for "I Can Too" and is a non-profit group that, according to their Facebook page, is committed to promoting, advocating and enhancing the rights of people with disabilities. The group, according to multiple media outlets, is comprised of neurodivergent individuals.

Held for the fifth consecutive year, the Earth Day* event attracted over 250 participants and kicked off with a 1.5 kilometre "Green Walkathon" from the Macau Science Centre to Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau's outdoor lawn, where the celebration continued with a short film created and screened by the association's neurodivergent students, a pickleball demonstration, and a tree planting event, among other activities.

Rutger Verschuren, Area Vice President, Macau and Hengqin of Artyzen Hospitality Group and General Manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, spoke with the media yesterday afternoon and in a separate interview with the *Post*, noted that each year sees a theme related to the environment and sustainability.

This edition's theme, according to a recent statement from the hotel operator, was geared towards promoting a deeper reflection on how paper products are consumed and discarded, and how repurposing even the simplest material can "spark community dialogue, inclusive creativity, and environmental action".

Verschuren remarked on the work that the association has done as they try to make a difference and work hard towards giving something back to the community. And as co-organiser, Verschuren told the *Post* that the hotel aims to contribute and help them with their cause and reach their goals, as well as assist them to have a successful event.

Meanwhile, when asked by reporters if Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau has plans to work with other associations for similar future events, Verschuren noted that it has indeed. "This is our way of contributing. It's not just about doing business... It's also about giving things back for the community and being part of it".

Verschuren added: "Many hoteliers start cheering when we make occupancy 100 percent... But having a successful day like this is much more meaningful than 100 percent occupancy in the hotel". ■

*Earth Day is annually celebrated on April 22.

MACAU EUROPEAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

"Waves of Portugal"

GALA DINNER - 16 MAY 2025

The Grand Pavilion at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau

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27th Myanmar water festival gathers revellers at 'Three Lamps'

Rui Pastorin

The skies were grey yesterday, but nothing could have taken away the vibrance brought on by the festive atmosphere at Rotunda de Carlos da Maia, colloquially known as the Three Lamps (三盞燈) rotunda, as the celebration of the 27th Macao Myanmar Overseas Chinese Water Festival took place.

The annual event, hosted by the General Association of Macau Myanmar Overseas Chinese, kicked off on Saturday and celebrates the traditional Myanmar New Year, known as Thingyan, that usually occurs in the middle of April. The event sees revellers, according to a recent statement from the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) website, splash water on each other and offer prayers.

During Thingyan, water splashing, a highlight of the tradition, represents the washing away of misdeeds and bad luck from the previous year. Cultural performances and religious activities are also among the traditions observed during the period.

Alive with the sound of music that had many singing along, yesterday's continuation of the traditional celebration had gathered crowds of joyful revellers, with several not being able to avoid getting soaked by the attendees who brought bottles of water and squirt guns.

Aside from water splashing, there were also a raft of other activities featured in the programme, among which were float parades held over two days, praying ceremonies and singing and dance performances.

Meanwhile, a food fair had also been set up on a nearby street, which gathered crowds to check out the 12 stalls selling various delicacies from Myanmar and Thailand, among other places, along with various drinks available to cool down, altogether offering a vibrant atmosphere to ring in the new year.



Revellers join the celebration for the 27th Macao Myanmar Overseas Chinese Water Festival at the Three Lamps District (三盞燈) yesterday afternoon. - Photos: Rui Pastorin

Journalists explore Macao's opportunities

William Xu in Hong Kong

About 100 journalists from various parts of the country continued their weeklong tour of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) yesterday to study the region's industrial momentum and social progress, with a focus on the Macao Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) economic vitality, tourism appeal and youth development initiatives.

On the third leg of their journey after visiting Shenzhen and Hong Kong, the media group's two-day itinerary in Macao included meetings with Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai and other senior government officials, as well as touring the city's key attractions and holding discussions with community leaders.

The tour began yesterday morning with an hour-long interview with Sam, followed by sessions with Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng-chon, and Wallis O Lam, the city's secretary for social affairs and culture.

In the afternoon, some members of the group visited the Macao Science Center and engaged with young businesspeople at the Macao Youth Development Service Centre, while others toured the Giant Panda Pavilion,

a popular tourist attraction housing four pandas – two gifted by the central government and two born locally, and see the development of the Macao Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre.

The media tour, which has drawn more than 100 journalists from nearly 30 media outlets across the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Macao SARs, aims to highlight the 11-city cluster Greater Bay Area's (GBA) economic pulse and sustainable growth by engaging with policymakers, corporate leaders and research institutions.

Setting off in Shenzhen on Wednesday, the journalists studied the innovation hub's advancement in chip manufacturing, artificial intelligence (AI) and other high-end technologies, as well as the city's business climate.

On Friday and Saturday, the group observed the confidence of local officials and international business heavyweights in Hong Kong's positioning as pivotal global financial and business hubs, and the HKSAR's strategic importance as a super connector and super value-adder.

The group will wrap up its Macao trip today and will proceed to Zhuhai – the final stop – tomorrow.

– Courtesy of China Daily

Sam says Hengqin is crucial to Macao's progress

Wu Kunling in Hong Kong and Atlas Shao in Macao

Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai said yesterday that Macao will continue to accelerate development of the Hengqin In-Depth Cooperation Zone to diversify its economy, strengthen global collaboration and boost links with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

He spoke at a meeting with a group of some 100 media representatives from across the country touring the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to explore the economic progress and prospects of the region's 11-city cluster.

Sam also outlined Macao's initiatives aimed at deepening industrial diversification, enhancing the Macao Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) cultural and tourism appeal, bolstering scientific research and providing a broader stage for the younger generation.

Sam reiterated the significant role of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone on Hengqin Island in the city's economic diversification.

He said the national-level initiative, geared to fostering integrated development among Macao and the rest of the GBA, will create extensive employment, living and growth opportunities for Macao residents. He urged the local business community, especially younger people, to embrace the GBA and national development more proactively through Hengqin.

Sam stressed that the primary focus on Hengqin is to fully capitalize on the advantages of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle to facilitate institutional connections, such as those of



Macao Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai speaks to participants in a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area media tour, at the Macao SAR Government Headquarters yesterday.
– Adam Lam/China Daily

laws and commercial regulations in the zone, while boosting investor confidence in Hengqin's business environment and policy consistency.

The MSAR government has set up a dedicated task force to actively drive the establishment of significant projects on Hengqin, he said.

The chief executive pledged that his administration will concentrate on optimizing businesses on Hengqin, and play a proactive role in helping Chinese mainland and overseas enterprises to settle there.

Macao welcomes all people to explore opportunities on Hengqin together, he said.

Sam also said he hopes to lead Macao in venturing into more markets, including Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, or Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries, adding that he wants to organize delegations of professionals from the tourism and related sectors for overseas visits to promote ties.

Sam also said that offices were planned to be set up abroad to showcase Macao's charm in culture, tourism and leisure.

Referring to the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), he said Macao should align itself closely with the pace of national development.

Sam said he has high hopes for various major projects in driving Macao's advance, such as a 20-billion-pataca international "university city" being built on Hengqin, a world tourism, cultural and exhibition zone located between the Macao Peninsula and Taipa, the expansion of Macao International Airport, as well as a planned industrial park for science and technology research and development.

Through these initiatives, Sam said he envisions Macao achieving greater industrial diversification, reducing its reliance on the gaming sector, and providing youths with broader career possibilities.

– Courtesy of China Daily



Participants meet with Macao Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai (rear, on the dais) at the Macao SAR Government Headquarters, during the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area media tour, yesterday.
– Adam Lam/China Daily

Govt to renovate square outside Catholic Cathedral from next week

Tony Wong

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced that it will start a project next week to repair and renovate the fountain in the square outside the city's Catholic Cathedral, as well as its surrounding facilities, as they are worn out after having been in use for over 20 years.

The bureau said that the whole project, which will be carried out in three phases, is scheduled to be completed in the fourth quarter of this year.

The area outside the Catholic Cathedral is officially known as Largo da Sé (大堂前地), which comprises a vehicular street and a small square.

The square, with a fountain in it, is used as a sitting out area as it is equipped with several benches.

The bureau made the announcements in a statement on Friday.

The statement noted that the

fountain and flowerbeds in Largo da Sé, as well as the surrounding facilities, have been in use for over 20 years as they were built in 2004, because of which they have aged and are worn out.

The statement underlined that the bureau previously carried out many repairs to the facilities, but the repairs have still been unable to stop the facilities from ageing and wearing out.

Below the square is a construction structure with its three sides built along two sloping alleys and a short alley connecting them. There are two other fountains near the square, built on the structure's wall at the corners of the short alley with the two sloping alleys, as well as murals made of Portuguese blue-and-white porcelain on the structure's wall.

In addition to the fountain and flowerbeds, the upcoming renovation will cover the two other

fountains in the short alley and the murals on the structure's wall.

The statement said that water supply pipes of the three fountains have become blocked due to rusting, resulting in failure to spout water, while the three fountains' pools have been affected by water

leakage. Moreover, the statement said, the flowerbeds and murals have also been affected by different levels of damages.

Consequently, the statement said, the bureau has decided to renovate all the facilities in a way that will keep their original appearance, style

and materials intact.

The renovation project, which will be carried out in three phases, will start on Wednesday next week, the statement said, adding that the whole project is scheduled to be completed in the fourth quarter of this year. ■



People sit next to the fountain in the square outside the Catholic Cathedral yesterday.

– Photo: Tony Wong

Legislative elections to have 37 polling venues



Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL) President Seng Ioi Man (centre) addresses Friday's press briefing at the Public Administration Building, flanked by fellow commission members (from left to right) Louie Wong Lok I, Mak Kim Meng, Lai U Hou, Ng Wai Han, and Daisy Ho In Mui. — Photo: GCS

Tony Wong

Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL) President Seng Ioi Man has announced that there will be 37 polling venues for the upcoming direct and indirect legislative elections, where 38 polling stations for the direct election and five polling stations for the indirect election will be set up.

This year's direct and indirect legislative elections are scheduled to be held on Sunday, September 14.

Seng made the remarks while

speaking to reporters on Friday after chairing a regular closed-door meeting of the commission at the Public Administration Building in Rua do Campo.

Seng noted that this year's direct and indirect legislative elections will have one more polling venue compared to the 36 in the previous elections in 2021.

Seng said that different to the 2021 elections when there was only one polling venue for the indirect election, this time there will be two polling venues for the indirect election.

The same as in 2021, there will be three polling stations for this year's indirect election at the Macao Polytechnic University's (MPU) Sports Stadium in Zape, but this time two additional polling stations will be set up at another venue, Kao Yip Middle School in Nape, according to Seng.

Seng said that in addition to polling stations for this year's indirect election, the two venues, the MPU Sports Stadium and Kao Yip Middle School, will also have polling stations for the direct election. ■

HK -Zhuhai-Macau Bridge sees surging foreign passengers

GUANGZHOU — Foreign passenger traffic through the Zhuhai land port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge has skyrocketed by 70 percent year on year, with over 172,000 international passenger trips recorded across the mega bridge as of yesterday, according to official data.

The rising figures are largely attributed to China's expansion of visa-free policies, with the Zhuhai land port of the bridge serving as the only land port on the Chinese mainland offering direct road access to Hong Kong International Airport.

As of yesterday, overall passenger trips across the bridge had risen 18.9 percent year on year to exceed 10

million, reaching the milestone 25 days earlier than in 2024.

Trips made by mainland residents across the bridge rose 30.3 percent to 4.18 million, while cross-border trips through the Zhuhai land port by Hong Kong and Macau-registered vehicles jumped 32.4 percent to nearly 1.2 million so far this year, with the daily average surpassing 10,000, according to the bridge's border inspection station.

The 55-kilometer bridge links China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), the city of Zhuhai in Guangdong Province, and the Macau SAR. It is the world's longest bridge-and-tunnel sea crossing. — Xinhua

China refines departure tax refund policy to encourage inbound consumption

BEIJING — In a fresh move to boost inbound spending, China unveiled a new set of measures yesterday to further optimize its departure tax refund policy to improve the shopping experience of overseas travelers.

The minimum purchase threshold for departure tax refunds has been lowered, allowing overseas travelers to apply for a refund if they spend at least 200 yuan (US\$27.75) at the same store on the same day and meet other relevant requirements, according to a circular jointly issued by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and five other government departments.

While ensuring proper risk management, refunds will be made available through multiple channels, including mobile payments, bank cards and cash, to better accommodate the diverse payment preferences of overseas travelers. The upper limit for cash refund has been raised to 20,000 yuan.

The circular also outlines steps to expand the number of departure tax refund stores, enrich the supply of related goods and improve related services.

More departure tax refund stores will be set up in major shopping areas, pedestrian streets, tourist sites, resorts, cultural venues, airports, passenger ports and hotels, according to the circular.

Departure tax refund stores are encouraged to broaden product offerings to include time-honored brands, renowned Chinese consumer goods, smart devices, intangible cultural heritage items, crafts and specialty products, among others.

A series of activities to promote shopping in China will be launched to support local efforts to cultivate and promote high-quality signature products, such as "city gifts" and "must-buy" items, in departure tax refund stores.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Sheng Qiuping, vice

minister of commerce, said that overseas travelers mainly purchased international brands when claiming tax refunds, with relatively few domestic brands available and limited shopping choices overall.

The lower threshold not only reduces the entry barrier for tax refund shopping, but also allows more specialty stores, souvenir shops, and gift shops with lower average transaction amounts to join the tax refund network, helping promote the sales of Chinese brands, Sheng said.

Meanwhile, the regulations regarding departure tax refund have been revised to optimize related services and streamline the refund process to help overseas travelers more easily benefit from departure tax refund policies, according to the country's taxation authorities.

Earlier this month, China announced a nationwide shift from a refund-upon-departure model to a refund-upon-purchase model for departure tax refund, enabling foreign visitors to instantly claim value-added tax rebates at tax-free stores across the country.

"Providing overseas travelers with a greater variety of shopping options and more convenient tax refund services will help stimulate inbound consumption and support high-standard opening up and economic growth," said Chen Binkai, vice president of the Central University of Finance and Economics.

China started to implement the departure tax refund policy for overseas travelers in 2015. Since its implementation, the scale of departure tax refunds has grown year by year, benefiting an increasing number of overseas travelers.

Official data showed that last year, the sales revenue of goods eligible for departure tax refunds and the amount of tax refunded both posted strong growth, rising by 120 percent and 130 percent year on year, respectively. — Xinhua

Industrial profits swing back to growth, up 0.8 pct in Q1

BEIJING — The combined profit of major industrial enterprises went up 0.8 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2025, reversing the 3.3 percent decline in 2024, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said yesterday.

The growth ended the profit downturn that had persisted since the third quarter of last year, NBS statistician Yu Weining said.

Industrial firms with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan saw their combined profits reach 1.51 trillion yuan during the first quarter.

"Despite an external environment that is becoming more complex and severe with increasing instability and uncertainty, the effects of China's macro policies have continued to emerge since the beginning of the year," Yu noted.

Incremental and existing policies have worked together to promote a strong start for the industrial

economy, the statistician said.

Profits increased in nearly 60 percent of China's major industrial sectors during the period, with 24 out of 41 major industrial categories registering year-on-year profit growth.

The manufacturing sector showed remarkable improvement, with its profit climbing by 7.6 percent year on year in the January-March period, an increase of 2.8 percentage points compared to the first two months.

Equipment manufacturing has become a key driver of profit growth. In the first quarter, the profit of equipment manufacturing industries rose by 6.4 percent year on year, 1 percentage point higher than in the first two months.

Their profit accounted for 32 percent of the total profit of major industrial enterprises, contributing to an overall profit increase of 2 percentage points.

Additionally, China's large-scale equipment renewals and consumer goods trade-ins have also boosted industrial profit.

Specifically, the profits of special-purpose equipment and general-purpose equipment makers increased by 14.2 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively, year on year. Profits for wearable smart device manufacturers and moped manufacturers soared by 78.8 percent and 65.8 percent, respectively.

During the first quarter, the combined business revenue of China's major industrial enterprises grew by 3.4 percent year on year, 0.6 percentage points higher than in the first two months.

China will continue to work on the detailed implementation of existing and incremental policies to fully release policy potential and promote the development of industrial enterprises, Yu said.

— Xinhua

China leads global agriculture drones deployment: US industry report

SACRAMENTO, United States — China has become a pioneer in embracing and scaling drone technology in farming, said a report by US clean tech news site CleanTechnica on Friday.

Beyond their low upfront costs, drones dramatically reduced operational expenses by lowering fuel use to near zero, sharply reducing chemicals used through

precise application, and cutting labor requirements substantially, said the report. Farmers transitioning from traditional spraying methods — whether tractor-mounted rigs or manned crop-dusting aircraft — regularly report savings of around 30 percent per square kilometer, factoring in reduced chemical volume, it said.

As regulations continue to

adapt worldwide, the agricultural drone revolution that began in China appears positioned to transform farming practices globally in the coming decade. If current growth patterns continue, by 2035, drone spraying could easily become standard practice on the majority of farms worldwide, said the report.

— Xinhua

China unveils draft of its first-ever environmental code

BEIJING—China is poised for a significant enhancement in its green efforts as a draft of the country's first-ever environmental code was unveiled yesterday.

The draft, submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) for a first reading, comprises 1,188 articles in five chapters including the general provisions, pollution prevention and control, ecological protection, green and low-carbon development, legal liability and supplementary provisions.

Once adopted, it will become China's second formal statutory code, after the Civil Code, which was adopted in 2020. The compilation of the environmental code was initiated in 2023.

China formulated its first environmental protection law in 1979. Ever since, the country has rapidly advanced its legislation on environmental protection. Today, China boasts over 30 laws, more than 100 administrative regulations and numerous other legal documents in this field, forming a relatively comprehensive legal framework.

The compilation of the code facilitates the systematic integration of legislation, fills gaps in the legal framework, elevates the status and authority of eco-environmental laws, and makes their enforcement and compliance more convenient, said Wang Canfa, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law.

China has long been a champion of green development. After decades of sustained

efforts, the country has emerged as a global leader in improving air quality and expanding forest resources.

In 2024, China saw significant improvements in its air quality. The average concentration of PM2.5 in cities at or above the prefecture level was 29.3 micrograms per cubic meter, a year-on-year decrease of 2.7 percent. The country is also home to the world's largest total human-made forest area. In 2024 alone, China planted 4.45 million hectares of trees and improved 3.22 million hectares of grassland.

However, the country's drive to strengthen ecological conservation remains at a critical stage, facing considerable challenges, and the mission to build a Beautiful China and advance modernization in harmony with nature still requires significant and sustained efforts, Shen Chunyao, director of the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission, said yesterday during an ongoing session of the top legislature when explaining the necessity of the draft code to lawmakers.

During the four-day session, scheduled to end on Wednesday, the lawmakers will review the draft environmental code, and other legislative bills.

The draft outlines China's overall requirements for green and low-carbon development. It establishes principles and guiding provisions on issues related to climate change and carbon peaking and neutrality goals, giving full consideration to

both international and domestic situations and the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

China will also engage in international cooperation on climate change, participate in, contribute to, and lead global climate governance efforts, according to the draft.

"Addressing climate change is a global challenge," said Zhang Zhongmin, a professor at the law school of Zhongnan University of Economics and Law. He added that the draft balances both international and domestic efforts, emphasizes mitigation and adaptation, and includes provisions for international cooperation, which will help enhance its international influence.

The draft also includes provisions for preventing and controlling pollution in various fields, specifically addressing air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination, as well as issues related to solid waste, noise, radioactive pollution sources, chemical substances, electromagnetic radiation, and light pollution.

The ecological protection chapter of the draft emphasizes the importance of safeguarding ecosystems, specifying that the country will enhance conservation efforts for forests, grasslands, wetlands, seas and marine islands, rivers, lakes, deserts, snow-capped mountains, glaciers, and croplands. It also calls for the advancement of major projects focused on protecting and restoring key ecosystems.

"The promulgation and implementation

of the code will promote the integrated protection of air, water, soil, and biodiversity, as well as the coordinated management of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands, and deserts," Wang said.

China's environmental law codification seeks to strike a balance between economic and social development and environmental protection, in contrast to some countries that focus primarily on either environmental preservation or economic gains, Wang said.

Speaking to the media, Lyu Zhongmei, vice chairperson of the NPC Environmental Protection and Resources Conservation Committee, said that China's environmental code should be rooted in the country's national conditions, while also drawing on best practices and learning from the experiences of the codification efforts of other nations.

"Having a separate chapter on green and low-carbon development is something that has never been done in other countries, and it is a significant feature of China's ecological environmental code," said Lyu. "This highlights the important value of our efforts in compiling this code, which is to implement the new development philosophy."

Highlighting the code's global significance, Lyu said that, based on the fundamental concept of sustainable development, the code will become a landmark achievement in global ecological progress, offering a legislative model for other countries to follow and leading the way in the development of ecological law worldwide. —Xinhua

Wang Yi holds phone talks with Pakistani deputy PM

MADRID—Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held phone talks with Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

Dar briefed Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on the latest tensions between Pakistan and India following a terrorist attack in the Kashmir region.

Dar emphasized that Pakistan has consistently and firmly fought against terrorism and is against any actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation. Pakistan is committed to managing the situation in a mature manner and will maintain communication with China and the international community, Dar added.

For his part, Wang said China is closely following the developments, stressing that combating terrorism is

a shared responsibility of the whole world while reaffirming China's consistent support for Pakistan's firm counterterrorism efforts.

As an ironclad friend and an all-weather strategic cooperative partner, China fully understands Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and supports Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and security interests, Wang said.

China advocates for a swift and fair investigation and believes that conflict does not serve the fundamental interests of either India or Pakistan, nor does it benefit regional peace and stability, Wang noted.

China hopes both sides will remain restrained, move toward each other, and work together to de-escalate the situation, he added. (More on Pakistan on p.9)

—Xinhua



This photo taken yesterday shows the booth of Chinese automaker Dongfeng at the Baltic Motor Show Riga "Auto 2025" in Riga, Latvia. —Xinhua

1st LD-Writethru: China warns Philippines to stop infringements on Tiexian Jiao

BEIJING—China Coast Guard (CCG) on Sunday warned the Philippines to stop infringements, as six individuals from the Philippines illegally landed on Tiexian Jiao in the South China Sea, disregarding warning and dissuasion from the Chinese side.

The CCG officers boarded the reef to conduct on-site verification and enforcement measures according to the law, said spokesperson Liu Dejun.

Liu reaffirmed that China holds indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Qundao, including Tiexian Jiao, and the

adjacent waters.

The Philippines' move violated China's territorial sovereignty and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and undermined peace and stability in the region, the spokesperson said.

"We urge the Philippines to cease its infringements immediately. The CCG will continue to protect China's rights and carry out law enforcement activities within China's jurisdictional waters," Liu stressed. (More on Philippines on p.8)

—Xinhua

Li Qiang chairs meeting on river and lake protection, child welfare

BEIJING—Premier Li Qiang yesterday presided over a State Council executive meeting, which made arrangements for river and lake protection and studied measures to further protect the welfare of children in difficulties.

The meeting also discussed the draft healthcare security law and decided to approve nuclear power projects including one in Sanmen of Zhejiang Province.

Noting that China's aquatic ecosystems have been continuously improving, the meeting called for adopting a targeted, scientific and law-based approach in pollution treatment, and urged coordinated efforts to improve water resources, aquatic environments, and aquatic ecosystems.

Forceful measures should be taken to address problems from the source, strengthen monitoring and source-tracing, and curb excess emissions, according to the meeting.

Highlighting the importance of welfare protection of children in difficulties, the meeting called for efforts to prioritize children's development and maximize benefits for children, and continuously improve the service systems for their living, medical, education, and mental health needs.

The meeting discussed and approved in principle the draft healthcare security law, and decided to submit it to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) for deliberation.

It also stressed absolute safety in nuclear power development. Efforts should be made to ensure that nuclear power units are built and operated in accordance with the highest global safety standards, and continuously enhance capacity building for safety supervision, the meeting said. —Xinhua