



# May Day visitors rise 42 pct in first 4 days

Tony Wong

Macau recorded 757,251 visitor arrivals in the first four days of the mainland's five-day Labour Day holiday, an increase of 42.3 percent from last year's corresponding period, according to data released by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on its website yesterday.

This year's Labour Day holiday in the mainland started on Thursday last week and ended yesterday.

Last year's Labour Day holiday also lasted five days.

In the first four days, between Thursday and Sunday, of this year's five-day Labour Day holiday, according to the MGTO data released yesterday, the number of visitor arrivals from the mainland increased 40.1 percent year on year to 618,104, while 90,472 visitor arrivals from Hong Kong were recorded during the four days, up 49.2 percent from last year's corresponding period.

According to the MGTO data, Macau recorded 176,873 visitor arrivals on the first day of this year's Labour Day holiday, 221,926 on the second day, 204,041 on the third day, and 154,411 on the fourth day, up 45.4 percent, 47.2 percent, 32.6 percent, and 45.6 percent year on year respectively.

In terms of single-day numbers, the nearly 222,000 visitor arrivals recorded on the second day of the mainland's Labour Day holiday this year exceeded the previous post-pandemic record of some 219,000 visitor arrivals, which were



A woman poses for a photo in front of the Ruins of St Paul's landmark yesterday, one of Macau's most popular tourist attractions.

— Photo: Tony Wong

recorded on the fourth day of the mainland's Spring Festival Golden Week holiday this year, i.e., the third day of the Year of the Snake.

Macau's highest single-day number of visitor arrivals was recorded on the third day of the Year of the Pig in pre-pandemic 2019, at some 226,000.

Meanwhile, Macau recorded some 837,000 entries and exits at its border checkpoints on Friday, the second day of the mainland's Labour Day holiday this year, breaking the previous highest

single-day number of some 803,000 recorded on January 18 this year, according to data released by the Public Security Police (PSP).

The police implemented special crowd control measures in streets and alleys around the UNESCO World Heritage-protected Ruins of St Paul's in the afternoon of the first four days of the five-day holiday period, to tackle the large crowds of visitors heading to the landmark.

Moreover, a vehicular lane in the section between the Rua Central junction and the Municipal Affairs

Bureau's (IAM) headquarters on Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, the city's main thoroughfare, commonly known as San Ma Lou in Cantonese, was temporarily closed to vehicular traffic and used for pedestrians for about three hours on Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the temporary pedestrianisation of Taipa Village was implemented during this year's five-day Labour Day holiday in the mainland, which ended yesterday, in anticipation of a relatively large number of tourists visiting the area.

The temporary pedestrianisation

of Taipa Village, which was implemented between noon and 7 p.m. from Thursday last week to yesterday, was the first time it was implemented for the mainland's Labour Day holiday period.

According to local media reports yesterday, businesses as well as community associations in the neighbourhood in general acknowledged the positive results in the government's implementation of the temporary pedestrianisation of Taipa Village for the Labour Day holiday. ■

## Israel army says expanded Gaza operation includes 'moving most of the population'

JERUSALEM — The Israeli army yesterday said its planned expanded offensive in Gaza, approved by the country's security cabinet, included "moving most of the population" of the Palestinian territory.

"The operation will include a broad attack, including moving most of the population of the Gaza Strip. This is in order to

protect them in a sterile area away from Hamas," army spokesman Brigadier General Effie Defrin said.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Huthis said the United States and Israel struck the port of Hodeida yesterday, hours after a reported US air raid on Sanaa and a day after the Iran-backed rebels targeted Israel's main airport.

The Huthi-run Al-Masirah television station said that "US-Israeli aggression targets with six strikes the port of Hodeida" on Yemen's western coast, also reporting "US-Israeli aggression on the Bajil district" in the same province.

Israel's military later confirmed the strikes on Huthi targets in Hodeida. (More on p.10) — Xinhua

## Casino takings rise 1.7 pct to 18.8 billion patacas in April

Staff Reporter

Macau's 30 casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 18.858 billion patacas (US\$2.35 billion) last month, a year-on-year growth of 1.7 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced on Thursday. Month on month, GGR in April was down by 4.07 percent from the 19.659 billion patacas recorded in March. In the first four months,

GGR increased by 0.8 percent year on year to 76.514 billion patacas.

In the first quarter of this year, according to the latest available official gaming statistics, baccarat generated 84.6 percent of local casinos' GGR, among their 16 games of chance. Gaming machines produced 5.6 percent of GGR in the first three months when roulette, Europe's classic game of chance, generated a mere 0.53 percent. ■

Macau's most popular English-language newspaper — Your trustworthy source of news & views

The Macau Post Daily

### 50 years on, China-EU partnership remains stabilizing force amid global uncertainties

Fifty years ago, on May 6, 1975, China and the European Economic Community — the precursor to today's European Union (EU) — established diplomatic relations, marking a pivotal moment in modern international diplomacy.

— Story on p. 7

### Cardinals assemble to elect pope, set course for church

All 133 Catholic cardinals who will vote for a new pope have arrived in Rome, the Vatican said yesterday, two days before they gather in conclave to elect the next head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

— Story on p. 10

### Spain opens probe after cable theft halts high-speed trains

Spanish police opened an investigation yesterday after thefts of copper cables halted high-speed trains from Madrid to the south, leaving thousands of passengers trapped in trains or stranded at stations.

— Story on p. 12



# Statistics – a vital tool for understanding Macau



I spent part of the long Workers' Day weekend holiday in Zhuhai but still found some time to comb through a bundle of recent statistical economic reports and projections concerning Macau. Perhaps not the most relaxing way to spend one's holidays, but I've been a statistics buff since my university years back in the 1970s.

According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) latest "World Economic Outlook: A Critical Juncture Amid Policy Shifts", published last month, forecasts Macau's real economic GDP growth of 3.6 percent for this and 3.5 percent for next year. Concerning this year's projection, that's a lowering of 5.2 percentage points from last year's 8.8 percent GDP growth, which sounds quite stark. However, on the other hand, the Washington-based lender gave Macau the highest expected GDP growth among the eight "Advanced Asia" economies, ahead of "Taiwan Province of China" (that's the official term the IMF uses for the Chinese island) at projected GDP growth of 2.9 percent for this year, Singapore at 2.0 percent, Australia (as one of the IMF's "Asian and Pacific Economies") at 1.6 percent, the Hong Kong SAR at 1.5 percent, New Zealand at 1.4 percent, (South) Korea at 1.0 percent, and Japan at 0.6 percent.

Next year as well, Macau is projected to enjoy the highest GDP growth among the eight "Advanced Asia" economies – that's not bad at all!

For the whole of the Asian and Pacific Economies, the IMF projects real GDP growth of 3.9 percent this and 4.0 percent next year, for "Advanced Asia", its forecasts are 1.2 percent for this and 1.4 percent for next year.

The mainland Chinese economy, which belongs to the IMF's "Emerging and Developing Asia" segment, is predicted to reach real GDP growth of 4.0 percent both this and next year, after last year's 5.0 percent.

"Advanced Europe" is forecast by the IMF researchers to have to content itself with 1.0 percent GDP growth this year, while the United States' one is predicted to reach 1.8 percent.

Incidentally, Fitch Ratings in a March report predicted Macau's

GDP growth to slow to 6.9 percent this year.

Well, forecasts should always be taken with a pinch of salt. The main problem with economic forecasts is their inherent uncertainty due to the complex and dynamic nature of economies, for economies heavily reliant on external factors such as Macau's in particular. For instance, in the first quarter of this year, imports accounted for 89.7 percent of Macau's total external merchandise trade, while the number of hotel guests shrank by 5.4 percent year on year to 3.57 million.

Macau's Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced in a statement last week that our city's GDP fell by 1.3 percent year on year in real terms to 99.78 billion patacas in the first quarter of this year.

Without elaborating, the statement attributed the decrease to a relatively high comparison base in last year's first quarter, "changes in visitor consumption patterns and other factors", as well as a 3.8 percent decrease in total exports of services, despite an 11.1 percent increase in visitor arrivals.

I agree with our government statisticians that "the decline in visitor expenditure has exerted pressure on the local tourism industry...., nevertheless, Macau's economy has maintained an overall recovery trend [from the rather severe impact of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic on the local economy, between early 2020 and late 2022], with stable public finances and a positive outlook".

The bureau also pointed out that "since the beginning of this year, the global environment has been marked by volatility and challenges, with subdued growth momentum for the world economy and increasing uncertainties in China-US relations".

I may add that it would be ingenuous to believe that the world economy's volatility caused by US President Donald Trump's misnamed "Liberation Day" (I think it should be called "World Trade Disruption Day" instead), when he launched his "reciprocal tariff" strategy early last month, will spare Macau's GDP any adverse impact – directly or indirectly, irrespective of its status as a free port and separate Chinese customs territory.

The last time that Macau suffered negative GDP growth year on year was back in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Now, let's turn to positive

economic figures, such as the Macau Special Administrative Region's financial reserves of over 620 billion patacas (that's more than about US\$78 billion!) and zero public debt remain the envy of the world – and all this despite our city's difficult economic predicament in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

Macau and Norway are among the world's very few economies that enjoy this enviable situation – Norway thanks to its sovereign wealth fund from oil revenues and Macau on account of its huge income from gaming taxes and levies that accounted for 88.4 percent of the government's total current revenue as of March this year.

The DSEC statement also said that "on the whole, barring major changes in external and internal conditions, Macau is unlikely to face a cyclical economic downturn and is expected to sustain its recovery momentum."

The phrase is forecasters' typical "ceteris paribus" ("all other things being equal", which one may also loosely translate as "provided that nothing changes") approach to the changeability of economic conditions in the real world.

"Barring major changes... Macau is unlikely to face a cyclical downturn..." is a rather sweeping statement for a statistics agency. I am of the view that statisticians should primarily focus on data analysis, probability, and modelling, while economists should focus on policy impacts, institutional frameworks,

and the interpretation of data within theoretical contexts. Perhaps, the statement is the result of a more econometric (statistics + economic theory) approach by the bureau to the interpretation of statistical data.

Forecasting a cyclical economic downturn requires a combination of economic theory, statistical modelling, and real-time data analysis. Close cooperation between statisticians and economists would be the best approach – economists interpreting economic trends and policy impacts, while statisticians detecting early signals from complex datasets.

The bureau also announced in its statement that starting from the first quarter of this year, it will release preliminary GDP figures – aka "advance estimates" – about a month after the end of each quarter, publishing the revised figures later on, with the aim of providing more timely GDP data to the public. It also said that revised GDP data for the first quarter of this year were slated to be released on May 16, i.e., a mere fortnight after publishing the preliminary data.

I wonder whether two weeks makes such a big difference of time between the release of preliminary and the (first issue of) revised GDP figures, considering that, according to international practice, GDP data are, anyhow, revised multiple times (often even more than twice), the third estimate usually being the "final" release, aside from annual revisions and benchmark revision every five years.

After all, in statistics, "final" customarily means "final for now." Revisions are a feature, not a flaw, as they reflect progress in measurement accuracy. Statistics, as science in general, is a never-ending process.

Applied statistics is distinct from pure mathematics – the former aims to tackle real-world problems using data, while the latter's objective is to prove theorems and structures.

I would like to conclude my editorial by reaffirming that I have regarded our Statistics and Census Bureau as one of Macau's best-run government entities since I started working in Macau four decades ago. I have used the bureau's data extensively – and gratefully – in my work as a journalist.

Keep refining your methods and deepen your partnership with economists! We will all benefit from it.

Last but not least, based on the local and international statistical and econometric data that I have been scrutinising recently, I believe that Macau's economic outlook for this and next year is cloudy but not bleak. That's good enough, bearing in mind the global economic turbulence primarily caused by Trump's disruptive weaponisation of US tariff policies.

I concur with nonagenarian US investor Warren Buffett when he said last week that "trade should not be a weapon". Instead, trade should promote progress, development, prosperity, and the common weal – that's my stand.

– Harald Brüning

## IC seeks exhibition proposals for 'Art Macao 2025'

Kristina Vallesteros

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has announced an open call for exhibition proposals for the Collateral Exhibitions of "Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2025" in a recent statement.

The selected proposals will be promoted as part of "Art Macao 2025", with the aim of "increasing the visibility of local exhibitions on the international stage", the statement noted.

The call welcomes proposals for the Collateral Exhibitions to be inaugurated between July 19 and October 12, running for at least two weeks. The proposers are responsible for securing their own exhibition venues, with no restrictions on scale or format, subject to legal and safety requirements, according to the statement, adding that the proposers will also bear the organisational expenses for their exhibition.

Those who are eligible to apply comprise Macau residents aged 18 or above, higher education institutions, commercial enterprises, and community associations registered in Macau. The statement said that the applications, including the application form and exhibition proposal in PDF format, must be submitted to [artmacao@icm.gov.mo](mailto:artmacao@icm.gov.mo) by 5 p.m. on May 23.

Chief Curator of "Art Macao 2025", Feng Boyi (馮博一), will select the proposals based on curatorial concept, exhibit quality, thematic relevance, curatorial team qualifications, proposal feasibility, and venue compatibility, according to the statement. The statement also noted that proposals submitted for other sections of "Art Macao 2025" are not eligible.

The "Art Macao 2025," is themed "Hey, what brings you here?," and features six sections: "Main Exhibition", "Public Art Exhibition", "City Pavilion", "Special Exhibition", "Local Curatorial Project",

and "Collateral Exhibition", the statement said. In addition to the Collateral Exhibition, the bureau has also launched an open call for its Local Curatorial Project, with its submission deadline being today, the statement said.

For further enquiries, one may contact the bureau on 8791 9892 / 8791 9814 or email. ■



This poster recently provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) promotes its open call for exhibition proposals for the "Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2025".

### Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
- Office Manager – Sally Cheong
- Marketing Manager – Kevin Cheung King Lok
- Managing Editor – Maria Cheung Ut Meng
- Editors – Lesley Wells, Johnny Un
- Senior Reporter – Tony Wong
- Reporters – Rui Pastorin, Ada Lei, William Chan, Ida Cheong
- Chief Graphic Designer – Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer – Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua
- Chatbots: Poe, DeepSeek

### Macau Weather

**MAINLY CLOUDY.  
OCCASIONAL SHOWERS.  
A FEW THUNDERSTORMS.  
FORCE 2 TO 4 SOUTH TO  
SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS WITH  
GUSTS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY  
WILL RANGE BETWEEN  
75% AND 98%.**



24°C~28°C

Source: SMG



# Over 4,000 free bottles of beer, 3,000 'Blessing Buns' distributed at Tam Kung Festival

Ida Cheong

The traditional Tam Kung Festival\*, held on eighth day of the fourth lunar month\*\*, was held in Coloane Village yesterday.

More than 30 performance groups paraded and performed around Coloane Village yesterday, coinciding with Buddha's Birthday, a public holiday.

After the parade, over 3,000 roast pork "Blessing Buns" and vegetarian peanut sweets were distributed to public.

Blessing Buns are a type of traditional Chinese steamed bun, often enjoyed during festivals, celebrations, and special occasions like Chinese New Year and other traditional folk festivals. They are called "blessing buns" because their name and shape symbolise good luck, prosperity, and happiness.

Moreover, the "Fun Beer Carnival" commenced outside the Chapel of St. Francis Xavier at 2 p.m. yesterday, providing over 4,000 free bottles of beer, traditional Coloane titbits, beer drinking competitions and music performances.

In the evening, Macau's reputedly largest open-air "Poon Choi banquet" with 188 tables was held yesterday, highlighting local heritage cuisine and aiming to gather Coloane's community spirit, according to the organisers. The Cantonese culinary term "Poon Choi" is also known as "Big Bowl Feast" in English.

The festival has been held for over 60 years and has become a traditional cultural celebration in Coloane, featuring more than 30 performance groups yesterday, as well as several toy windmill and about half a dozen cultural creative products' stalls for charities were set up in the square. Speaking to the media at the start of the festival, Coloane Son I Charity Association President Yeong Keng Hoi said in a speech that he expected over 5,000 participants and attendees. "Son I" means "Obey Justice".

Meanwhile, to celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, which is also celebrated on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth lunar month, the 2025 edition of the "Mobile Buddha Bathing Stand" took place outside the Na Tcha Temple next to the Ruins of St. Paul's. on Saturday and Sunday, i.e., on the eve of yesterday's Buddha's Birthday, which was organised by Buddha's Light Association Youth of Macau.

The event featured a Buddha Bathing\*\*\* Zone, where participants purified their minds and prayed while ritually washing a statuette of Buddha. Additionally, several charity stalls offered vegetarian food and handmade cultural products, alongside creative workshops such as plaster painting and DIY herbal sachet-making, encouraging participants to focus their minds through artistic expression. ■



Participants queue to get free bottles of beer outside the Chapel of St. Francis Xavier in Coloane yesterday.



Tam Kung Festival performers parade and perform around Coloane Village yesterday. - Photos: Ida Cheong

\*The Tam Kung Festival is a traditional Taoist celebration held primarily in coastal regions of southern China, particularly in Macau and Hong Kong, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth lunar month, honouring Tam Kung (譚公), a revered sea deity believed to protect

fisherfolks, seafarers, and coastal communities from disasters and bring good fortune. - DeepSeek

\*\*On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth lunar month, coinciding with Buddha's Birthday, the Festival of the Drunken Dragon and Tam Kung Festival takes

place in Macau. - DeepSeek

\*\*\*The Bathing the Buddha (浴佛) ritual is a sacred Buddhist ceremony performed to honour the birth of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), traditionally celebrated on Buddha's Birthday. - DeepSeek

# Galaxy Music Gala to offer a 'Musical Journey from Monaco to Macau'

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Macau is presenting the classical music concert "Galaxy Music Gala: A Musical Journey from Monaco to Macau" on May 21, with the one-night event celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Monaco.

According to a recent statement from the company, the concert featuring the Monaco Zhangomusiq Concertmasters Orchestra will start at 8 p.m. at the Galaxy Auditorium at Galaxy International Convention Centre (GICC) in Cotai.

The orchestra, which gathers musicians from France and Monaco, is on its China tour supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Monaco and led by Zhang Zhang, the concertmaster and violinist of the upcoming concert. She founded the non-governmental organisation "Zhangomusiq" in 2007, the statement noted.

The statement said that Zhang is the first Chinese musician of the Monte Carlo Philharmonic and was invited by Prince Albert II to perform for leaders of China and Monaco during the 2019 state visit by President Xi Jinping. She is also an award-winning author and public personality, according to the statement.

Conductor and guitarist Pablo Márquez, who has performed in various venues and collaborated with renowned orchestras in over 40 countries, and Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra Principal Horn Andrea Cesari, who earned the Horn Soloist title at the Audimozart! during the Mozart International Competition in 2008, are also among the featured musicians.

The statement said that the 70-minute concert programme will include Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings; Gordon Jacob's Horn Concerto, performed by Cesari; and an Asia Premiere performance of Manuel de Falla's Three Dances, arranged for guitar and string orchestra and featuring Márquez. ■



These undated handout photos recently provided by Galaxy Macau shows concertmaster and violinist Zhang Zhang (left to right), conductor and guitarist Pablo Márquez, and Andrea Cesari, principal horn of the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra.





Leong Kit Man presents her artwork at the opening ceremony of her exhibition last week.



Leong Kit Man poses in front of her artwork "Embracing Love" last week. – All photos provided by Leong

## Leong Kit Man presents flower-and-bird painting 'Embracing Love'

Interview by William Chan

Local artist Leong Kit Man, an assistant professor in the Fine Arts Programme at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), has unveiled her latest large-scale work, Embrace of Love, which was created as a commission for the China National Arts Fund (Young Artistic Creation Talent) Support Programme 2024. The exhibition, now open on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of MUST's Tower R, marks a milestone in Leong's career as one of only three local artists selected for the national initiative in 2024.

A seasoned artist of gongbi, a traditional Chinese painting technique characterised by meticulous brushwork and layered colouration, Leong is well-known for her fusion of natural imagery and human emotion. An artist featured regularly in the *Post*\*, she mentioned Embrace of Love last year in an exclusive interview where she first conceptualised the project. With the 1999 establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) as its theme, Leong said that the piece juxtaposes vibrant, lifelike depictions of birds nesting in a bodhi tree against a monochrome backdrop of Macau's evolving skyline.

The manuscript Leong showed me last year displayed in the foreground of Embrace of Love capturing a flock of birds returning to their nests in a bodhi tree adorned with wish-bearing tags, symbolising familial harmony and shared purpose, as well as Macau's return to the motherland.

"Like these birds, we are transient beings in the eyes of ancient trees," Leong said, adding: "Amid the rush of urban life, coexistence – whether in society or at home – is a rare treasure. Life may be fleeting, but love and moments of connection endure."

In an interview with the *Post* last week, Leong gave insights into her long-awaited exhibition and the completion of Embrace of Love (244 cm x 198 cm, mineral pigments, silver foil on paper), a centrepiece years in the making. The newly completed distant backdrop, rendered in stark black-and-white ink washes, traces Macau peninsula's shoreline, where historic structures stand alongside modern towers. Five bridges, including the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB), arching across the composition serve as silent witnesses to the city's post-1999 transformation. "This coastline has been in flux since the [1999] handover. While progress reshapes lifestyles, I'm drawn to relics of time – like the century-old bodhi trees in Coloane's old quarters. They remain verdant and resilient, quietly observing Macau's journey," Leong said.

For over a decade, Leong has honed her signature style, blending symbolic motifs from classical Chinese flower-and-bird painting with contemporary themes. "I merge tangible forms and emotional resonance in my sketches," she said. "From subject matter to composition, colour, and technique, every element is guided by the philosophy of traditional Chinese art. Whether through intimate studies

or grand canvases, my works pulse with reverence for the natural world."

Curated by her longtime collaborator Julia Lam Tsz Kwan, the exhibition showcases six large-scale flower-and-bird paintings alongside preparatory sketches, colour studies, and a digital animation of Embrace of Love. "Julia deeply understands my artistic journey and style," Leong remarked. "She curated a precise narrative and ensured the quality of accompanying cultural products." Leong also expressed gratitude to co-ordinators Xue Yihan and Mina, as well as all of her mentors and other artists who helped organise the event.

### China National Arts Fund

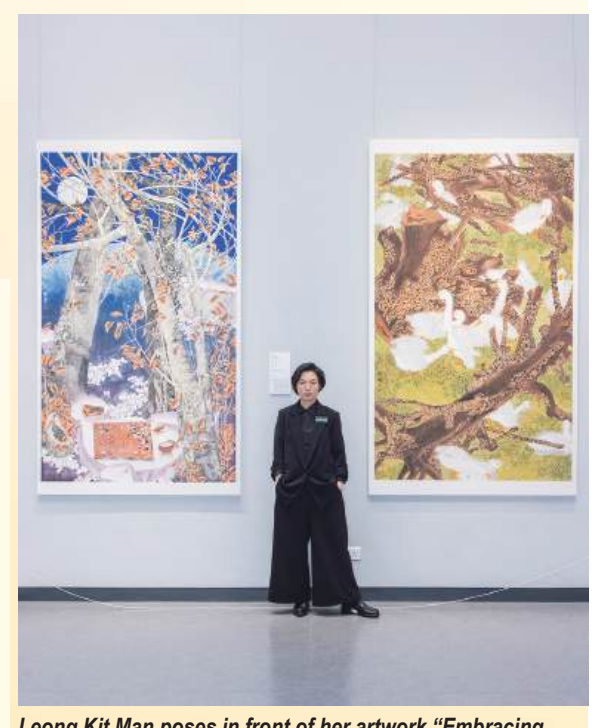
Established in 2013 by the central government, the China National Arts Fund (CNAF) is a nonprofit public initiative dedicated to fostering artistic excellence, nurturing talent, and advancing national cultural development. Since expanding eligibility to Hong Kong and Macau in 2020, the fund has become a vital platform for local creators. "CNAF offers tremendous support for artists," Leong emphasised. "Complemented by the [Macau] Cultural Development Fund's initiatives, it empowers us to aspire beyond Macau – to share our heritage on global stages."

The exhibition is open daily until Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 11 p.m., with free admission for all attendees.

\*<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/22454>



Participants of the opening ceremony pose at the exhibition last week.



Leong Kit Man poses in front of her artwork "Embracing Love" last week.



## Finalists announced for USJ's poetry contest

Rui Pastorin

The list of finalists for the University of Saint Joseph's (USJ) upcoming "Macao-wide English Poetry Writing and Recital Contest 2025" was recently announced on their website.

This year's contest, which marks its fourth edition\* and again sees students vying for top prizes, is themed "Mini me in a wide wide world" and was open for entries in three categories: "Elementary School", "Secondary School", and "University", with submissions received between March 17 and April 3.

The top prizes for the Elementary (Primary 3 to 6) and Secondary (Form 1 to 6) categories are 1,500 patacas and 3,000 patacas respectively, while the champion of the University category will receive 5,000 patacas.

The judging criteria on the private Catholic university's website noted that 25 percent of the total grade is in poetry writing, while poetry recitation makes up the remaining 75 percent of the total.

A total of 55 finalists are listed on the USJ website, with 20 each in the Elementary and Secondary categories, while there are 15 in the University category. The statement reminded the finalists to submit their required documents by May 12, or risk renouncing their spot. More details can be found on <https://www.usj.edu.mo/en/>.

The finals for each category will be held on May 17 at the USJ Ilha Verde Campus from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. ■

\*Last year's competition attracted over 500 submissions.



This poster downloaded from the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) website promotes the 4th Macao-wide English Poetry Writing and Recital.

## Govt mulls expanding smoking ban to more outdoor areas: health chief

Tony Wong

Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long says that the government is studying the feasibility of a legal ban on smoking in more outdoor areas such as designated areas outside schools and crèches.

Dr Lo made the remarks while speaking to reporters on the Mong Ha campus of the public Macao University of Tourism (UTM) in the peninsula on Sunday on the sidelines of a public event there.

In Macau, smoking is banned in all indoor public venues and facilities, except smoking lounges in casinos and at the airport.

In addition, smoking is also prohibited at certain outdoor public venues such as public parks and gardens, public beaches, footbridges, pedestrian underpasses, as well as an area within 10 metres of all public bus stops.

Illegal smoking carries a fixed fine of 1,500 patacas.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Dr Lo said that the government is planning

to propose amendments to the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law.

The health chief said that the government does not yet have a schedule as to when it expects to complete drafting the proposed amendments.

Amendments to laws proposed by the government must be passed by the legislature to take effect.

According to Dr Lo, the government's proposed amendments to the anti-smoking law would include a legal ban on smoking in more outdoor areas such as an area within a designated size outside all schools and crèches, the modus operandi of which would be similar to the current implementation of a smoking ban in an area within 10 metres of all public bus stops.

Moreover, Dr Lo said, the proposed amendments would also include only permitting the sales of cigarettes that have a simple and plain design on their packets with the aim of making their packets less attractive to potential smokers. ■



Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long speaks to reporters on the Mong Ha campus of the Macao University of Tourism (UTM) on Sunday. - Photo courtesy of TDM

## Customs busts 14 smuggling cases, seizing 594 items

Ada Lei

From April 21 to May 1, local customs officers separately intercepted 14 individuals, including a 16-year-old student, at the Barrier Gate and Qingmao checkpoints for attempting to smuggle a total of 152 used computer processors, 362 used mobile phones, and 80 used computer memory modules by hiding them under their clothing, according to a statement from the Macau Customs Service (SA) on Friday.

According to the statement, on the afternoon of April 23, customs officers noticed a suspicious 16-year-old schoolboy at the Barrier Gate checkpoint who appeared nervous and was walking stiffly. Customs officers suspected that he was concealing contraband. Upon inspection, they discovered that he had eight used mobile phones taped around his legs under his trousers in an attempt to smuggle them from Macau to Zhuhai.

The statement also noted that between April 23 and 30, customs officers identified several travellers acting suspiciously at both checkpoints. Two men concealed 80 used computer memory modules and 56 used mobile phones; five tourists, comprising two men and three women, hid a total of 147 used mobile phones; a woman concealed 120 used computer processors; two men had a total of 75 used mobile phones; another man hid 44 used mobile phones; one concealed 32 used computer processors; and a woman hid 32 used mobile phones. All of



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Customs Service shows a 16-year-old Macau smuggler with eight used mobile phones wrapped around his legs.

them were attempting to smuggle goods to Zhuhai.

The 14 suspects involved in these cases, aged from 16 to 73, comprised locals and mainlanders. The suspects face fines of up to 50,000 patacas each. The seized contraband will be declared property of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR). Given that one of the suspects is a student, the Customs Service has informed the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) about the case.

In the statement, the Customs

Service reminded citizens carrying items in or out of Macau to adhere to relevant laws and regulations and to avoid engaging in smuggling activities for profit. Customs officers will continue to enhance inspections at Macau's border checkpoints and crack down on all forms of smuggling, whether by hiding or disguising items, the statement said, adding that citizens who notice smuggling activities are encouraged to report them to the Customs Service via its hotline 2896 5001, fax 2896 5003, or email [info@customs.gov.mo](mailto:info@customs.gov.mo). ■

## Customs nabs man illegally entering Macau with swimming kickboard

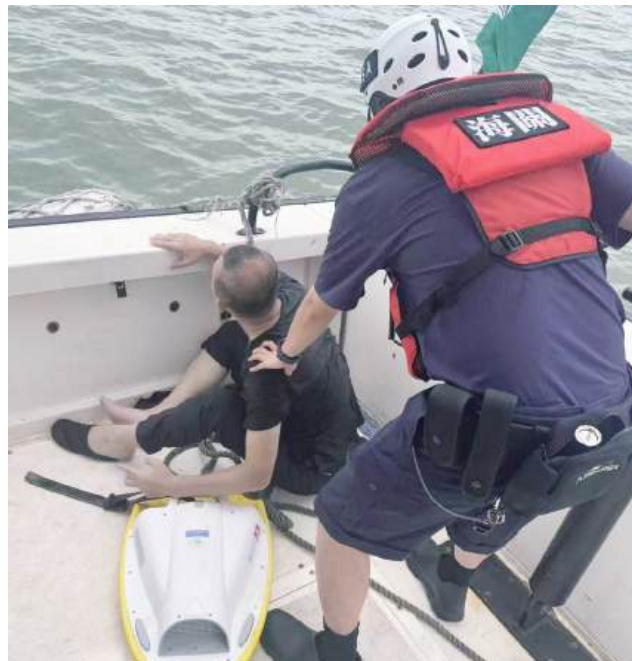
Ada Lei

A 48-year-old man from the mainland was caught red-handed on Thursday while attempting to illegally enter Macau using an electronic swimming kickboard, according to a statement from the Macau Customs Service (SA) on Saturday.

In response to International Workers' Day, the Macau Customs Service strengthened its maritime and coastal operations to prevent and combat illegal activities. On Thursday, a customs patrol boat in Cheoc Van (竹灣) spotted the man

as he was attempting to swim toward the Macau coast using an electronic swimming kickboard. Suspecting illegal immigration activity, the customs officers intercepted him and brought him ashore for further investigation. The customs officers discovered that the man is currently banned from entering Macau.

He has been transferred to the Correctional Services Bureau (DSC), charged with entering Macau without going through immigration control procedures. He has been sentenced to five months behind bars. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Customs Service (SA) on Saturday shows a customs officer with the illegal immigrant next to the latter's electronic swimming kickboard on a patrol vessel at Cheoc Van Beach (竹灣).



# How Gen-Z reshapes China's holiday tourism scenes

## Analysis

BEIJING — A DIY flower-studded gradient dress, a vast lawn packed with people, the smell of famous local dishes and the sound waves of a pop concert.

Mismatched as they may sound, such are the things that Zhu, a high school student from Guangzhou, was surrounded by at the concert of Chinese pop star Hua Chenyu during the five-day May Day holiday in south China's city of Foshan.

"I have never been to such a theme park-style concert, where you can stand, sit, or even lie down to enjoy the event," she said, while also referring to the combination of food, drinks and entertainment.

A typical Gen-Z, Zhu spent over 20 hours designing and making her "flower dress" especially for the concert. Turning concerts into emotion-driven travel experiences during the holiday, her story is far from unique across China.

## CONCERT TOURISM

According to tourism platform Meituan Travel, concerts and music festivals have become major consumption hotspots during this year's May Day holiday, as more than 100 large-scale commercial performances with over 5,000 attendees were scheduled over the five days nationwide, projected to draw over 2 million spectators and contribute to more than 2 billion yuan in hotel and tourism-related spending.

Xu Momo, a researcher with another tourism platform Tongcheng Travel, said that people born after 1995 now make up 65 percent of the concert-going population, and just like Zhu, "many of them are not just buying tickets — they're building 'rituals.'"

"From wearing fan-themed outfits and taking themed transport, to snapping up fan-colored flowers and checking in at exclusive hotel photo spots, a single concert outing can trigger four to five rounds of social sharing," Xu said.

This pattern of treating concerts as gateways to lifestyle experiences is driving a new paradigm in the platform economy, she said.

Guicheng, the district of Foshan hosting the Hua Chenyu concert, was well aware of the chain effect. Two weeks before the event, a regional subway line linking the venue was

covered with colorful elements related to the superstar, drawing a daily average of over 25,000 passengers from various regions.

Also in south China, hotel bookings in Haikou, capital of Hainan Province, during the May Day holiday increased by 3.4 times year-on-year, the highest growth among major tourist cities of the country, according to data from travel platform Qunar. The surge is largely driven by a concert featuring the popular boy band Teens in Times (TNT), scheduled during the holiday.

Li Yangran, general manager of a 182-room resort hotel in Haikou, felt it firsthand, saying that the property's occupancy rate remained over 90 percent from May 1 to 4, and nearly 60 percent of the guests stayed for the concert, most of whom were born in the 1990s and 2000s.

To ride the trend, local authorities had encouraged businesses to roll out special offers. For Li's hotel, concert ticket holders could enjoy 10 percent off room rates, 12 percent off dining, and duty-free shopping coupons provided by the hotel.

Jian, a 29-year-old who traveled from Beijing to Haikou with her mother, fancied the idea and said they planned on using the coupons to shop at duty-free stores, visiting the Wenchang Space Launch Site, and experiencing the traditional fishing lifestyle in Lingshui after the TNT concert.

## DIVERSIFIED DESTINATIONS

Apart from "concert economy," China's Gen Z is also reshaping the tourism landscape by favoring lesser-known destinations over traditional hotspots.

Qiao Yan, a 25-year-old office worker in Beijing, chose to spend this year's May Day holiday in the coastal city of Rizhao in east China's Shandong Province — not usually among the hottest tourist spots — and opted for a more relaxed approach.

Upon checking in at her guesthouse, she walked to a nearby seafood restaurant, ordered a local seafood platter, and enjoyed her meal while taking in the ocean view through the window. For the following days, besides meals, she planned to spend her afternoons basking in the sun on the beach, daydreaming or just relaxing in nearby cafes.



Passengers prepare to get on a train at Qinhuangdao Railway Station in Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province yesterday, the last day of the May Day holiday. — Xinhua

"In the past, my travel plans were always packed, and by the end of the day, I would feel even more exhausted than when I was working," she said. "This time, I just wanted to take it easy and enjoy the local food and a slower pace of life."

Qiao is not alone in embracing this new style of "relax-and-eat" travel. According to data from Mafengwo, a popular Chinese travel platform, avoiding crowds has become a major priority for young travelers during this year's May Day holiday. Searches and interest in "less crowded, off-the-beaten-path destinations for May Day" have surged by 200 percent over the past month.

According to data from Trip.com, tourism orders in county-level markets during the holiday have surged by 36 percent year-on-year, far surpassing the growth seen in major first- and second-tier cities. Hotel bookings in smaller cities such as Anji, Yanji, and Dujiangyan have also jumped by 64 percent, while ticket sales for attractions have soared by over 200 percent.

Homestay platform Muniao also reported a 126 percent year-on-year increase in county-level tourism orders as of late April. Many counties have subsequently emerged as hot spots for the holiday, including Pingtan and Xiapu of Fujian, Changli and Lingshui of Hainan, as well as Luanchuan and Zhongmu of Henan.

The outbound travel industry is also experiencing the shifts brought by Gen Z, which has become a rapidly growing driving force.

Yang Jinsong, a senior researcher with the China Tourism Academy, said that outbound travel destinations are diversifying, with more varied and diverse destination choices emerging, indicating that the recovery of China's outbound travel market is not just a rebound in scale but also a sign of structural upgrading and ecological transformation.

The shift was also present in how Gen Z decided on travel-related issues. In many travel livestreams, more and more young people from this generation are making consumption decisions through both immersive experiences and real-time interaction.

Pan Bo, vice president of the HCG International Travel Group, noted that Gen Z draws inspiration from places like the video platform Bilibili and lifestyle social media "rednote" and attaches great importance to the "experience-sharing" loop. "A complete trip for them is not just about where they go, but also how they are seen," he said.

To cater to Gen Z's demand for emotional value in consumption, outbound travel service providers are continuously developing themed products such as study tours and travel photography, fulfilling their need for a sense of participation and social sharing.

## TRIP COMPANIONS

Gen Z's demand for greater emotional value has also driven them to actively seek better companionship during their trips, which has been available thanks to the highly developed social media today.

One of them is Chen Duoduo, a Gen Z college student based in east China's Nanjing, who plans to hire a "local companion" to take some good pictures of her during her upcoming trip. According to Chen, the cost can be covered by the income from her part-time job as a "local companion," from which she earned about 1,000 yuan during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday in early April.

On "rednote," one of the most popular social media platforms among Gen Z, the tag of "local companion" has garnered over 63.43 million views and 1.05 million comments as of May 4.

Jiaying, a Shanghai native in her 20s, started her local companion business in March, providing makeup, photoshoots, photo editing and itinerary planning. She has received over 30 orders through social media and other online platforms.

Most of her clients are also young people aged between 20 and 35, especially visiting females looking for a "temporary bestie" to take photos with, go shopping, and enjoy good food together.

A typical example is her first client, a girl who did not want to visit Shanghai alone but had no friends in the city to accompany her. While Jiaying showed the girl interesting places in Shanghai, her client also shared her experience working as a game companion.

This enjoyable experience has solidified her decision to become a paid local companion. "I feel like I can learn a lot from other people's experiences. Their life stories become part of my own, and at the same time, I become part of theirs," she said.

Zhang Chunlong, a senior researcher on social policies at the Jiangsu Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, believes that today's young people, facing mounting pressure from work and life, place greater value on emotional connection.

The growing pursuit of emotional resonance has created vast market potential for what he calls the companionship economy. "The rise of the companionship economy results from multiple factors coming together. It meets the modern demand for emotional support, personalized services, and flexible employment," he said. — Xinhua

# Countries giving in to US tariff pressure would suffer greater harm, says former Thai minister

## Interview

BANGKOK — The US tariff measures are "one sided" and lack theoretical justification, said former Thai finance minister Suchart Thadathamrongvech, warning that countries giving in to US unreasonable demands could suffer greater harm.

"There is no reason to bow to US pressure," Suchart said in a recent interview with Xinhua, pointing out that the US tariff measures are severely impacting developing countries like Thailand while also hurting American consumers.

He warned that countries choosing to compromise could end

up suffering even more. "If you bow, [the US] will ask more and more. There will be never-ending."

A series of tariff policies and the subsequent changing courses have created significant disruption to global trade, he said.

As a former economics professor, Suchart argued that the rationale of the US government for raising tariffs is not supported by economic theory, citing studies showing that the burden of previous US tariffs has been borne primarily by American consumers rather than foreign exporters. Even if some industries were to return to the United States, it would take a long

time, and the damage caused in the meantime is severe.

"America is hurting its own people," he said. "Goods are disappearing from the shelves of the supermarkets, and the prices are going to be skyrocketing."

Suchart went on to point out that the United States has long been a major beneficiary of the current global trade system.

"The United States has long relied on printing money to buy from the rest of the world. They should not complain much as people are willing to give them real commodities in exchange for

printed money," he said.

Export-driven economies like Thailand are facing serious challenges due to tariff volatility, he said, noting that export planning typically requires several months of lead time and sudden changes in trade policy make it extremely difficult for countries and businesses to adjust their production and market strategies in time.

Thailand's Ministry of Finance has recently lowered its 2025 growth forecast from 3 percent to 2.1 percent, citing the impact of US tariffs and a global economic slowdown. The Thai central bank

earlier said the country's economic growth could fall to just 1.3 percent this year in the worst-case scenario.

Suchart called on countries to stand firm and protect their own interests under such pressure, urging members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to continue supporting free trade, strengthen ties with other trading partners, and enhance coordination through the ASEAN framework to safeguard shared interests.

"Relying too heavily on a large market with unpredictable policies like the United States puts us at risk," he said. — Xinhua



# 50 years on, China-EU partnership remains stabilizing force amid global uncertainties

Commentary by Xinhua writers Zhang Zhaoqing, Chen Binjie

BRUSSELS – Fifty years ago, on May 6, 1975, China and the European Economic Community – the precursor to today's European Union (EU) – established diplomatic relations, marking a pivotal moment in modern international diplomacy.

Over the decades, China-EU ties have become a central pillar of the global landscape, shaping developments in politics, security, trade, investment, technology and environmental cooperation.

As the international order faces new headwinds – from geopolitical tensions to economic fragmentation and disruptions in global supply chains – the China-EU relationship stands out as a crucial stabilizing force.

Reflecting on the development of China-EU bilateral relations over the past 50 years, the most valuable asset is mutual respect, the most powerful impetus is mutual benefit, the greatest unifying consensus is multilateralism, and the most accurate characterization is a cooperation partner.

The China-EU partnership is particularly evident in economic and trade relations. China and the EU enjoy complementary strengths and mutual benefits in economic and trade cooperation, forging a synergy that speaks for

itself. Official data showed that bilateral trade grew from US\$2.4 billion to US\$780 billion over the past five decades.

Across numerous sectors, especially automotive and luxury industries, Europe contributes design expertise, regulatory rigor and innovation, while China brings high-quality manufacturing, skilled labor and a vast and dynamic consumer base. Together, they have created jobs, revitalized industries and boosted global growth.

The China-EU freight train service has also become a vital artery for bilateral trade. A major milestone in this growing partnership was reached late last year, when the 100,000th China-Europe freight train arrived in Duisburg, Germany, underscoring the scale, resilience and growing relevance of this transcontinental link.

China also leads in global green technology, advanced manufacturing and digital infrastructure, areas that strongly resonate with the EU's goals of carbon neutrality and digital transformation.

With over 400 million middle-income earners, China is not only the world's factory, but also a fast-growing consumer market. According to the Rhodium Group, China's total consumption has kept pace with economies of similar size, and over the

past two decades, its consumption growth has significantly outstripped countries with comparable GDP per capita levels.

Beyond economic and trade cooperation, China and the EU share a deep commitment to global stability and multilateralism, which has guided their collaborative efforts on key international issues.

With no fundamental conflicts of interest or geopolitical contradictions between the two sides, China and the EU champion the central role of the United Nations, resolve international issues through dialogue, and oppose unilateral bullying. Over the past five decades, China-EU relations have not only fostered mutual development but also contributed significantly to global peace and prosperity.

From supporting the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue to advancing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and opposing decoupling and supply chain disruptions, China and Europe have consistently reinforced their shared commitment to a multilateral and multipolar world.

Calls for “decoupling” under the misleading label of “de-risking” represent a perilous gamble that could lead Europe toward self-sabotage. The real danger lies in

turning away from one of the world's most dynamic economic powerhouses precisely when global stability and sustainable growth are urgently needed.

As major economies in the world, China and Europe share the responsibility to jointly uphold economic globalization and a fair international trade environment, resist unilateral bullying practices, and defend their legitimate rights and interests while safeguarding international fairness and justice.

As advocates of economic globalization and trade liberalization and strong supporters of the World Trade Organization, the two sides should enhance coordination, expand mutual openness and jointly uphold free and open trade and investment, while ensuring stable global industrial and supply chains.

After World War II, Europe rebuilt itself on the ideals of integration and mutual benefit. Visionaries like Robert Schuman believed that peace and prosperity were born from unity, not division.

This same philosophy should underpin the future ties between Europe and China: prioritizing openness over protectionism, dialogue over distrust, and partnership over exaggerated notions of “competition and systemic rivalry” that could cloud the two-way relations. – Xinhua

## 137<sup>th</sup> Canton Fair concludes with record number of overseas purchasers



Buyers talk with an exhibitor at a garment booth at the 137<sup>th</sup> China Import and Export Fair in Guangzhou yesterday. The 137<sup>th</sup> China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, concluded yesterday, with organizers announcing the participation of over 288,000 overseas buyers. – Xinhua

GUANGZHOU – The 137<sup>th</sup> China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, concluded yesterday in Guangzhou, with organizers announcing the participation of over 288,000 overseas buyers.

This was a 17.3 percent increase from the previous session and hit a new high. There were 171,750 first-time attendees. Purchasers from countries participating in Belt and Road (B&R) cooperation totaled 187,450, up 17.4 percent year on year and representing 64.9 percent of all overseas buyers.

The event also attracted over 527,000 online buyers from 229 countries and regions around the world.

A total of 4.55 million exhibits were showcased, including 1.02 million new products, 880,000 green and low-carbon products, and 320,000 smart products.

The inaugural service robotics zone emerged as a highlight of the event, with 46 Chinese manufacturers presenting over 500 advanced robots covering 60 industrial applications.

Established in 1957, the Canton Fair is held twice a year in Guangzhou. It is the longest-running of several comprehensive international trade events in China and has been hailed as the barometer of China's foreign trade. – Xinhua

## US tariff policy signals win-lose mentality: Swiss business leader

Interview

GENEVA – The United States' tariff policy has created widespread uncertainty and reflects a confrontational approach to global trade, Robert Wiest, president of the Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (SCCC), said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

The United States has recognized that it has deindustrialized too much, Wiest said, adding that it is now trying to bring back jobs and industrial capacity by using tariffs, which are “a very crude tool.”

Wiest, who recently returned from a 10-day business trip to Japan and China, criticized the tone and direction of the US government's trade policy, calling it “definitely not very productive” because, up to now, it has not yet yielded a result. Instead, it has created uncertainty and alienated not only allies but also important trading partners, he said.

A recent SCCC newsletter described the ongoing tariff disputes as resembling “a negotiation that started poorly - and continues to unfold poorly.”

According to Wiest, the United States could have approached the issue collaboratively by engaging allies and partners in constructive dialogue. But instead, it chose to open negotiations in a very aggressive manner. That signals a focus on a win-lose outcome, which is rarely conducive to successful talks, he said.

In a notable example, US President Donald Trump imposed a 31 percent “reciprocal tariff” on imports from Switzerland – significantly higher than the 20 percent imposed on the European Union (EU) – before announcing a 90-day pause shortly thereafter.

“Switzerland was caught off guard by the level of tariffs imposed,” Wiest said, adding that even more damaging than the tariffs themselves is the uncertainty they create for businesses.

Currently, a 10 percent tariff remains in effect. Coupled with the strength of the

Swiss franc against the US dollar, the cost pressures are making it more difficult for Swiss companies to compete in the American market, Wiest explained.

Exports are a cornerstone of the Swiss economy, accounting for approximately 80 percent of its gross domestic product. Of that, 55 percent is bound for the EU, 15 percent for the United States, and five percent for China.

With the US market becoming less stable, Switzerland's bilateral treaties with the EU and its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China are gaining in importance, he noted.

“The US accounts for only about 13 percent of global trade,” Wiest said. “Yes, it's a major market for Switzerland. But if it were to close off completely, there would be disruption for three or four years. After that, alternative markets could be developed to make up for the loss.”

On the issue of US tariffs targeting China, Wiest pointed out that China has made significant progress in diversifying its industrial base. In green technology – including solar panels and wind turbines – emerging markets such as the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America have become key destinations.

As a result, he said the US tariffs on Chinese green tech exports will have limited impact.

China is also climbing the value chain beyond low-cost manufacturing, he noted. In the electric vehicle sector, for example, China has established a fully integrated value chain – from battery production to vehicle design, manufacturing, and global sales, Wiest said.

He added that China is becoming increasingly attractive to Swiss industries such as machinery, pharmaceuticals, and luxury watchmaking, citing an improving business environment and growing opportunities.

The SCCC, he said, will continue to strengthen ties with both the Swiss and Chinese governments to support its members amid ongoing global trade uncertainties. – Xinhua