

# **OVERVIEW OF THE MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION IN 2021**

During the second half of 2021, as Macao faced the volatile pandemic situation, all Macao residents joined hands to overcome all difficulties, and actively supported the city-wide nucleic acid tests and anti-pandemic measures, so that the spread of the coronavirus was suppressed. This again testified to the fine traits of mutual aid and unity of Macao people!

While combating the pandemic, the MSAR Government intensively and persistently upheld the spirit of the instructions from President Xi Jinping, and implemented all plans outlined in the policy address of 2021. In September, the seventh Legislative Assembly was successfully held; and in December, the second Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Macao SAR (2021–2025) was announced – aiming to seize opportunities in national development, leverage and consolidate Macao’s competitiveness and advantages, and participate in the overall national development.

The Government continued improving people’s livelihoods, commenced urban planning projects, announced the summary report on the consultation regarding the draft version of Macao’s Urban Master Plan (2020-2040), expanded investment in public projects, enhanced support for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and promoted the recovery of society, the economy and tourism.

In 2021, a new breakthrough in regional cooperation was achieved. The Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was announced, marking a new stage of full cooperation, mutual discussions, joint construction, joint administration and shared benefits between Guangdong and Macao for the development of Hengqin. As construction of the Macao New Neighbourhood in Hengqin and the LRT Hengqin Line project commenced, and the Qingmau Checkpoint became operational, the establishment of infrastructure interconnections between Guangdong and Macao was further enhanced.



## Just and Upright Legislative Assembly Election and Patriots Governing Macao are of Great Significance



The seventh Legislative Assembly Election was held on 12 September 2021. This was an election of great political significance after the full implementation of the principle of “patriots governing Macao”.

After reunification with the motherland, the MSAR Government and all sectors of society have comprehensively and correctly upheld the principles of “One country, two systems”, “Macao people governing Macao” and a high degree of autonomy, strictly following the Constitution and the Basic Law. The Government is continuously improving the systems related to the implementation of the Constitution and the Basic Law, and implementing the principle of “Macao people governing Macao” with patriots paramount.

The process for confirming applications by the nomination committee for the direct election and indirect election of the seventh Legislative Council Election was completed on 15 June. The Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election (CAEAL) received a total of 27 applications, 22 of which were for direct elections and five for indirect elections; while two candidacies were waived. According to the Legislative Assembly Electoral Law and the election calendar, on 24 June, the CAEAL confirmed the legal existence of 19 direct election nomination committees and five indirect election nomination committees. As at 5 July, the deadline for the nomination committee to submit the candidate lists and manifestos to the CAEAL, the CAEAL received a total of 19 candidate lists and manifestos for direct elections and five for indirect elections.

On 9 July, the Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly

Election, Tong Hio Fong, said that the CAEAL had examined the candidate lists aiming to contest the elections in accordance with the law and found that among the 19 candidate lists for direct elections, one was not qualified as a voter; in addition, it was proven that in six candidate lists, a total of 21 candidates did not support the Macao Basic Law and had not sworn allegiance to the Macao SAR, thus were not eligible for election. Hence, a total of 23 persons were not eligible to be elected.

### **Election Upholding the Basic Principle of “Patriots Governing Macao”**

During a press conference on 12 July, the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election reiterated that, in order to determine whether a person is ineligible for being elected, the CAEAL must examine not only the declaration signed by the candidate, but also whether the candidate has committed acts that do not support the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China or has not sworn allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China. If a candidate is found to have committed relevant acts, he or she will be ineligible for election. The relevant regulations of the Electoral Law also stipulate that the candidates must be patriots.

The CAEAL stated that the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China is the fundamental law of the country and the basis for the formulation of the Basic Law. To support the Basic Law is to support the Constitution and its established principles, especially “One country, two systems”, “Macao people governing Macao”, “a high degree of autonomy” and “the leadership of the Communist Party of China”.

Additionally, “One country, two systems” is the basic principle of the Central People’s Government in governing the Macao SAR. “One country” is the premise and foundation of “two systems”, and “patriots governing Macao” is an important principle that must be followed in order to comprehensively and properly implement the “one country, two systems” principle.

Therefore, candidates must truly uphold the Basic Law, the Constitution and the principles established therein, and must be patriots. As patriots, candidates must safeguard national sovereignty, safety and development interests, and must respect and safeguard the fundamental system of the nation and the constitutional order of the Macao SAR. Candidates must not engage in any activities that endanger national sovereignty and security, challenge the authority of the Central People’s Government and the authority of the Basic Law of Macao, or use Macao to infiltrate and cause damage to mainland China.

The CAEAL mentioned in particular that the Amendment to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, which was voted on and passed in the first session of the 13th National People’s Congress Standing Committee on 11 March 2018, added to Clause 2 of Article 1, “The leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics”, which more fully reflects the ruling status of the Communist Party of China. Therefore, upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China has become an important basis for determining whether a candidate is eligible to stand for election, or disqualified from standing for election in the current Legislative Assembly Election.

In summary, in order to review the eligibility of all candidates, and in particular implement the relevant stipulation of Clause 8 of Article 6 of the Election Law, the Electoral Affairs Commission

for the Legislative Assembly Election has formulated the following criteria:

1. Candidates must uphold the authority of the Constitution and the Basic Law: if it is proven that a candidate has organised or participated in activities to overthrow or undermine the fundamental system of the nation established by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, or intended to do so, or has made statements related to such acts, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
2. Candidates must uphold a unified China and territorial integrity of the country: if it is proven that a candidate has committed acts that endanger the unity and territorial integrity of the nation, made secessionist remarks or participated in any way in these activities, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
3. Prevent candidates from colluding with foreign countries or with external elements to infiltrate the authorities of the Macao SAR: if it is proven that a candidate has participated in training activities that are anti-China and aim to disrupt Macao that are arranged by overseas anti-China forces or organisations, including but not limited to accepting funding from these organisations, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
4. Candidates must respect the political structure established by the Constitution and the Basic Law: if it is proven that a candidate has maliciously attacked, smeared or vilified the People's Republic of China or the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, or has made remarks related to these acts, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
5. Candidates must not engage in acts that endanger national sovereignty and security: if it is proven that a candidate has violated the stipulations of Law No. 2/2009 - "Law on the Defence of National Security", the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
6. Candidates must respect the authority conferred on the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee by the Constitution and the Basic Law: if it is proven that a candidate has maliciously attacked or smeared the legislation, interpretations or decisions passed by the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.
7. Candidates must not play a supporting role in activities as stipulated in items 1 to 6: if it is proven that a candidate has provided tangible support, assistance or increased convenience in any way for the implementation of activities as stipulated in items 1 to 6, the candidate is deemed ineligible for election under the law.

The CAEAL emphasised that the above-mentioned criteria are for assessing the eligibility of candidates for election. The criticisms of candidates regarding the governance of the MSAR Government do not fall under the fourth criterion. In fact, the more stringent requirements of the Electoral Law on the eligibility of candidates are in consideration of the higher requirements of the MSAR Government for its governing team and the full implementation of the principle of "patriots governing Macao".

The CAEAL reiterated that, in accordance with the Basic Law, all Macao residents enjoy

freedom of speech. Macao residents will not be penalised for voicing their opinions unless otherwise stipulated by law.

On 13 July, the CAEAL announced that the list of candidates for the direct election of the Legislative Assembly had been reduced from 19 to 14, and the total number of candidates was reduced from 159 to 128. The candidate lists had decreased by five groups due to non-replacement of candidates, the replacement of candidates who were not eligible to stand for election, and as some candidates quit the election, resulting in the number of eligible candidates in a list falling to below the statutory minimum of four.

Twenty-one of the original candidates were ineligible to be elected because it was proven that they failed to uphold the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, or did not swear allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China; they became 20 candidates, as one of the candidates proposed a replacement. The indirect election remained unchanged, with 12 candidates in five lists of candidates.

On 13 July, the Government issued a statement, stating that in accordance with the stipulations of Articles 6 and 10 of the Legislative Assembly Election Law, the seventh Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election of the Macao Special Administrative Region had legally deemed 20 candidates ineligible for election as they failed to uphold the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, or had failed to swear allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The MSAR Government expressed its strong support for the rejection of the list of five electoral groups.

The government further stated that upholding the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and swearing allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China are the basic standards that members of the Legislative Assembly should meet. In accordance with the powers conferred on it by law, the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election is responsible for safeguarding the overall interests of the Macao SAR, upholding the authority of the Macao SAR established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, and implementing the fundamental principle of patriots governing Macao.

The statement mentioned that deeming some of the candidates ineligible for the election does not affect the fundamental rights enjoyed by Macao residents in accordance with the law, nor does it affect their freedom of speech, or affect their right to know about and play a role in supervising the administration of the Government. The MSAR Government will continue to protect the legal rights and interests of the general public in strict accordance with the stipulations of the Basic Law and the laws of Macao, and support the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election in performing its duties in accordance with the law, so as to ensure the successful implementation of "One country, two systems" with Macao characteristics, and to maintain the prosperity and long-term stability of Macao.

## **Deepening Formulation of the Contingency Plans for Pandemic Prevention During the Election**

This was the first Legislative Assembly Election held during the pandemic. In the face of the

pressure to prevent and control COVID-19, the CAEAL continued to maintain close contact with the health departments, continued to intensify its campaigning and polling day prevention measures, formulated contingency plans for any changes in the pandemic, and adopted stringent pandemic prevention measures during the election campaign stage to ensure that the entire campaign and polling activities were conducted healthily and smoothly while ensuring public health and safety.

On the polling day, there were strict requirements for pandemic prevention measures, with a one-metre pandemic prevention distance and advisory signs. Voters were required to undergo body temperature checks and present Health Codes, clean their hands, wear masks, and maintain an appropriate social distance. It is also worth mentioning that the Government specially set up three mobile polling stations, to ensure that voters who were under medical observation in designated hotels could exercise their right to vote.

### **Working Together to Support a Clean Election**

To support the seventh Legislative Assembly Election, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) continued organising publicity activities at different levels to spread anti-bribery messages to the public through a variety of publicity and educational methods, such as organising community roadshows and a WeChat quiz for promoting a clean election, working meetings with various candidate lists, and briefing sessions for direct election groups, to enhance public understanding of the laws of the Legislative Assembly Election. The CCAC also urged the public to report any illegal acts involving election bribery by immediately calling the election complaint hotline, to jointly uphold a corruption-free election.

From the beginning of the Legislative Assembly Election campaign to polling day, the CCAC conducted about 8,000 inspections, with satisfactory results.

### **Half of the Directly Elected Members are New Faces**

Polling for the seventh Legislative Assembly Election ended smoothly at 9pm on 12 September. The preliminary polling results were announced in the early hours of 13 September: 14 directly elected and 12 indirectly elected legislators were elected, and 50 percent of the directly elected legislators were new faces.

After polling ended, the Chairman of the CAEAL, Tong Hio Fong, said that from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, a total of 137,281 voters cast their votes in direct elections, representing a turnout rate of 42.38 percent, while 7,000 legal persons cast their votes in indirect elections, representing a turnout rate of 87.33 percent.

On 14 September, the General Audit Committee of the seventh Legislative Assembly Election announced the audited results of the vote counting. The Chairman of the Committee, Kuok Kin Hong, said that after auditing, 15 direct election ballots were deemed valid, including six contested and nine void ballots, and one indirect election void ballot was declared valid. According to the counting results, 137,279 voters had cast their votes in the direct election, with 132,071 valid votes, 3,141 blank votes and 2,067 invalid votes.

The 14 directly elected legislators were as follows: Si Ka Lon, Lei Cheng I, José Maria Pereira

Coutinho, Zheng Anting, Leong Hong Sai, Wong Kit Cheng, Song Pek Kei, Leong Sun Iok, Che Sai Wang, Lam U Tou, Lo Choi In, Ngan Iek Hang, Ma Io Fong, and Lei Leong Wong.

The *Macao SAR Gazette* published an Executive Order, through which Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng appointed Ma Chi Seng, Iau Teng Pio, Pang Chuan, Wu Chou Kit, Kou Kam Fai, Chan Hou Seng and Cheung Kin Chung as legislators of the seventh Legislative Assembly of the Macao SAR. On 16 October, 33 legislators were sworn in, with their oaths administered by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, before their four-year term of office commenced.

## Safeguarding National Security and Comprehensively Protecting the Safety of Macao



In 2021, public order in Macao remained stable and peaceful, and a comprehensive variety of crimes were stringently combatted. The Government fulfilled its constitutional responsibility to safeguard national sovereignty, safety, and development interests; continued perfecting the legal system and law enforcement system for safeguarding national security; and strengthened law enforcement. Also, the Government enhanced promotion of national security education, to strengthen public awareness of national security; consolidated patriotism as the social and political foundation, through cooperation and coordination; and implemented every effective measure to prevent infiltration and interference by external forces, to fully demonstrate the principle of “patriots governing Macao”, thereby safeguarding the overall stability of Macao and national security.

## Continued Perfecting Legal Systems and Law Enforcement Mechanisms

In 2009, the Government of the Macao SAR formulated the Law on the Defence of National Security, and in 2018 it established the Committee for Safeguarding National Security. Subsequently, the Government has continuously enhanced and updated a series of supporting systems related to national security, including the Judicial Organisation Framework Law and the Cyber Security Law.

To more efficiently combat illegal entry and overstaying and prevent crime, the Law No. 16/2021 - Legal System on Immigration Control, Authorisation to Stay and Residence Permits in the Macao Special Administrative Region and the major plan for its detailed execution – By-law No. 38/2021 – came into force on 15 November 2021.

On 3 December, the Executive Council completed the bill on the “Legal System for Interception and Protection of Communications” and submitted it to the Legislative Assembly for deliberation. The bill proposed increasing the number of applicable offences for interception of communications, and adjusting the regulations regarding the methods and contents of interception, to comply with the needs for detecting serious and specific crimes, in order to keep pace with the development of new communication technologies. This was not only one of the tasks for perfecting the laws and regulations for safeguarding national security, but also an important measure to strengthen law enforcement and protection of rights, to safeguard public safety.

In view of the complexity of safeguarding national security, the Chief Executive submitted a report to the Central People’s Government, asking for permission from the Central People’s Government for setting up National Security Adviser and National Security Technical Adviser posts in the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao Special Administrative Region. With the approval of the Central People’s Government, the MSAR Government diligently acted in accordance with the decision of the Central People’s Government. On 14 December, By-law No. 47/2021 - Amendment to By-law No. 22/2018 on the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao Special Administrative Region came into effect, explicitly setting up a National Security Adviser and three National Security Technical Advisers in the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

The National Security Adviser is responsible for monitoring, guiding, coordinating and supporting the MSAR Government with commencing national security work, and attending the meetings of the Committee for Safeguarding National Security; whereas the National Security Technical Adviser is responsible for assisting the National Security Adviser in implementing the relevant work, giving advice on matters related to the duties and responsibilities of the Office for Committee for Safeguarding National Security, and attending the meetings of the office. The Government passed the amendments to the related by-laws, to provide local legal grounds and assurance for the National Security Adviser and National Security Technical Adviser, as they fulfil their duties and responsibilities.

In conjunction with the Judiciary Police – which is empowered with the functions of national security law enforcement and the establishment of relevant subsidiary units – the designated unit for safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests of the MSAR Government is fully operational, further strengthening the protection of national security and cyber security, and enhancing the ability to prevent and suppress terrorism and high-tech crimes. Perfecting the

legal system and law enforcement mechanism also helps to ensure the effective implementation of the decisions of the Central People's Government in Macao, providing stronger protection for the overall security of the country and Macao.

In addition, on 21 June, the MSAR Government amended the "Organisation and Operation of the Unitary Police Service" through By-law No. 20/2021, which includes the establishment of a Department of Computer and Information Technology, and a Department for Studying, Making Plans for and Coordinating Civil Protection Operations. The Unitary Police Service will coordinate the amendments to and enhancement of various specialised contingency plans, in accordance with the framework of the new Civil Protection Master Plan approved by the Chief Executive, in order to be well prepared for emergencies and better protect citizen's lives and property.

In response to the decisions on the amendments to the Law on the National Flag and the Law on the National Emblem, which were voted on during the 22nd session of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress, the MSAR Government has made amendments and enhancements to Law No. 5/1999 on the Law on Use and Protection of the National Flag, National Emblem and National Anthem, and By-law No. 5/2019 on Provisions Regarding the Use of National and Regional Flags and Emblems and the Instrumental and Vocal Performance of the National Anthem, which came into effect on 27 July, in accordance with the Basic Law of the Macao SAR and the principles, legislative intent and related amendments to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the National Flag and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the National Emblem, in order to execute the decision and ensure the accurate and effective implementation of the above-mentioned national laws in the Macao SAR.

The by-law advocates that citizens should use the national flag on appropriate occasions, and specifies that citizens may wear the national emblem on dignified occasions to express their patriotism; perfects the specifications of the national flag and national emblem; enhances the regulations on deploying the national flag during mourning, and lays down the circumstances in which the national flag may be used to drape the coffin of certain persons; improves the regulations on the use of the national flag and national emblem; and improves the regulations on education regarding the national flag and national emblem.

Since the enactment of the by-law, the national emblem has been prominently displayed on the homepages of the websites of the Chief Executive's Office, the MSAR Government Portal, the Legislative Assembly, the Courts and the Public Prosecutions Office, as well as other websites specified by the Chief Executive.

## **Strengthen Citizens' National Awareness and Patriotism**

National security is the responsibility of all citizens. It is important to deepen the awareness and understanding of the importance of safeguarding national security among young people in Macao and different sectors in the community, so that they will voluntarily fulfil their civic responsibilities and obligations in safeguarding national security. Patriotism education and promotion from different perspectives also play important roles in this regard.

The year 2021 marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. From 23 June to 15 July, the MSAR Government joined hands with the Information Office of the

State Council and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region, to organise a photo exhibition for celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China. The exhibition enabled Macao people to revisit the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party's journey as it faced difficulties together with its people, and to commemorate the noble spirit of the revolutionary martyrs, thereby consolidating the social and political foundation of patriotism in Macao, and passing the core values of loyalty to our country and to Macao on to the younger generation.

The 23-day exhibition attracted 43,735 visitors and received enthusiastic responses from all sectors. The overwhelming numbers of bookings for visits by community organisations, private companies, government departments and schools fully reflected Macao people's sense of belonging to the motherland, their pride in being Chinese, and their recognition of the Chinese Communist Party.

In addition, the "National Security Education Exhibition", jointly organised by the MSAR Government and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR, was held for the fifth consecutive year, to demonstrate the latest progress by the country and Macao in improving the establishment of the national security system. The exhibition attracted over 42,000 visitors; plus there were over 330,000 visits to the related website.

In 2021, the "National Security and I" Chinese Essay Writing Competition for secondary school students was held for the first time, with over 4,800 entries, in which students expressed their feelings regarding their responsibilities towards the country and Macao, fully demonstrating young people's strong awareness of national security and their profound love for the country and Macao.

Over the years, the National Security Education Exhibition has been effective in raising awareness of national security among the general public, which further promotes the efforts of all sectors of the community in safeguarding national security, as well as the long-term prosperity and stability of the country and Macau. To complement the MSAR Government's education and promotional campaigns on national security, various government departments, academics and community organisations have been actively organising relevant activities to provide the community with a clearer and more accurate understanding of the meaning and importance of national security-related laws and regulations.

## **Timely and Precisely Adjusting Measures in Response to Changes in the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As 2021 began, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continued causing worldwide impacts. Despite the gradual decline in serious cases and death rates after the emergence of vaccines, some countries and regions with lower vaccination rates still had high numbers of confirmed and hospitalised cases. In order to ensure the safety and health of Macao residents, and facilitate the stable recovery of society and the economy, the Government has been continuously reviewing and improving pandemic prevention work. By implementing appropriate pandemic prevention measures that were consistent with those of the nation through close cooperation, joint pandemic prevention and control, we have overcome the fluctuating pandemic situation.



## Promoting Vaccination to Ensure Public Health

With the full support of the Central People's Government, the first batch of 100,000 doses of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Macao on 6 February. On 9 February, the vaccines were made available to priority groups in the first phase of vaccinations, including frontline staff in checkpoints, police officers, fire service officers, cold-chain food handlers, staff in entertainment venues, teaching and administrative staff in schools, and people who urgently needed to travel to regions with medium to high risk.

On the morning of 9 February, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng led principal officials of the Government to receive vaccinations, to show the Government's confidence in the vaccines. After receiving vaccination, the Chief Executive said that he felt nothing unusual and no adverse reaction. He appealed to all Macao residents to participate in pandemic prevention, and protect their own health by receiving vaccination on a voluntary basis.

On 9 February, 595 people received COVID-19 vaccinations, and the total number of people in priority groups who had booked vaccinations had exceeded 1,300. On the same day, the Health Bureau started accepting bookings from residents who were not in the priority groups, for vaccinations starting from 22 February. On the first day, 4,033 people successfully made appointments for vaccination, including approximately 2,500 people who opted to be vaccinated on 22 February.

To enable all residents in Macao to receive vaccinations, the Health Bureau established 12 vaccination stations, providing up to 5,000 vaccinations per day. Residents could select vaccination stations when making appointments. At each vaccination station, healthcare professionals were

available to conduct health assessments for residents. Upon being vaccinated, residents were required to stay in the vaccination station's observation area for 30 minutes, to ensure there were no immediate side effects.

On 27 February, the first batch of 100,000 doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, jointly produced by BioNTech, a German company, and Shanghai Fosun Pharma, arrived in Macao. Starting on 3 March, the Health Bureau arranged vaccinations for residents who opted for the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. On the same day, an Executive Order was issued and published in the *Macao SAR Gazette*, specifying the persons applicable for receiving the two types of COVID-19 vaccines through the "Special Vaccination Programme of the Macao SAR", according to the standards of the National Medical Products Administration.

During the year, the Health Bureau established more vaccination stations in various districts of Macao, to facilitate public vaccinations. As at the end of 2021, there were 18 vaccination stations in Macao. Meanwhile, the Health Bureau also organised outreach vaccination services with the Social Welfare Bureau, Kiang Wu Hospital and several gaming operators.

As at the end of 2021, a total of 970,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered in Macao, with 493,000 people vaccinated, among whom, 31,000 had received the first dose, 430,000 had received the second dose, and 33,000 had received the third dose. The number of vaccinated people represented 72.2 percent of Macao's total population; while the number of vaccinated people aged three or above represented 74.1 percent of the total population in this age range.

To face the challenges arising from the more transmissible new coronavirus variant – Omicron, from the first half of November 2021, the Health Bureau arranged COVID-19 booster vaccinations for employees in high-risk roles and people who urgently needed to travel to high-risk regions. On 7 January 2022, the scope of vaccination was expanded to all residents aged 18 or above, and individuals in urgent need of receiving booster vaccinations at least three months after receiving the second dose.

## Persisting with Preventing Imported Cases and Community Transmissions

On 3 August 2021, two Macao residents visiting Zhuhai were confirmed to be infected with COVID-19. Thereafter, their two children living with them were also confirmed to be infected. On the same day, the Chief Executive declared that Macao had entered a state of immediate COVID-19 prevention with effect from 3:30 p.m., and all outbound border-crossing individuals must hold valid proof of a negative nucleic acid test result issued within 24 hours. With effect from midnight on 4 August, the time limit for a valid nucleic test was tightened to 12 hours.

Region-specific, multi-level disease prevention and control were implemented for the first time. Based on the residence and movement of the confirmed cases, red code and yellow code zones were designated, to trace middle- and high-risk target groups for medical isolation. On 4 August, with effect from 9:00 a.m., the first round of community-wide nucleic acid tests was launched, with the aim of cutting off the COVID-19 transmission channels.

With the assistance of 300 testing personnel from Guangdong province sent to Macao at the request of the MSAR Government, the community-wide nucleic acid testing was successfully

carried out, and no confirmed cases were found. As at midnight on 18 August, after the people within the red code and yellow code zones had undergone multiple nucleic acid tests, no confirmed case was found, thus the Government announced the reopening of the red code and yellow code zones.

On 22 September, a Macao resident who returned to Macao from Turkey was confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 during medical observation. On 24 September, a Nepalese security guard in the same quarantine hotel was also confirmed to be infected. The Health Bureau immediately conducted nucleic acid tests of related persons, and one more confirmed case was found. Macao again entered the state of COVID-19 prevention. With effect from 3:00 p.m., the Health Bureau launched a new round of community-wide nucleic acid tests, in order to prevent community transmissions. Through the region-specific and multi-level disease prevention and control mechanism, four more security guards from the same hotel were confirmed to be infected; they were close contacts of the two newly confirmed cases.

On 5 October, another confirmed case was found in Macao. The infected person was a non-local renovation worker who lived in Doumen, Zhuhai, and became the 72nd confirmed case of COVID-19 in Macao. According to genetic comparison, the strain of coronavirus was found to be homologous with the one detected in the security guard group.

The Macao authorities responsible for Macao-Zhuhai COVID-19 prevention and control announced that the medical observations and quarantine exclusion arrangement at the Zhuhai-Macao ports would be cancelled with effect from 12 noon on 5 October. After entering Zhuhai, individuals would be required to undergo medical observations and quarantine. By the evening on the same day, two more confirmed cases were found among the renovation workers working for the same unit as the case detected earlier in the day. Thereafter, three more contacts of the 72nd confirmed case were also found.

Also on 5 October, the Health Bureau announced the launch of the third round of community-wide nucleic acid tests. As at 9:00 a.m. on 7 October, a cumulative total of approximately 680,000 people had been tested. All specimens collected for the tests proved negative for COVID-19. Ahead of schedule, the Health Bureau announced that the third round of community-wide nucleic acid tests had been successfully carried out, with a total of 2.1 million tests conducted.

Taking into account of the latest developments in the pandemic, on 7 October the Health Bureau and the Macao Government Tourist Office started optimising the workflow for medical observations in hotels, including by implementing “close-loop management”; introducing robots to provide contactless services, such as temperature scanning and delivery of supplies. This was to minimise contacts between employees in high-risk roles and people under quarantine.

In view of the poor hygiene and overcrowding at San Mei On Building (Phase 1), where the 75th confirmed case resided, the building was considered unfavourable for pandemic prevention. On 10 October, the Health Bureau moved 821 people from the building to Treasure Hotel for medical observation.

To more precisely and promptly tackle the challenges arising from pandemic, the Health Bureau developed a beta version of Macao Health Code mobile app, which was launched on 18 November, with functions including venue codes and risk checking. The app’s venue codes were first launched in public medical institutions. By the end of 2021, the scope of the app was expanded to cover public

buses and all social services facilities in Macao. As at the end of 2021, there were approximately 133,000 registered users of the Macao Health Code mobile app, and by mid-January 2022, the number of registered users had increased to 479,000.

As at 31 December 2021, there was an accumulated total of 79 confirmed cases recorded in Macao, of whom 77 had recovered and been discharged. Macao has maintained a record of zero deaths, zero hospital transmissions, low rates of severe cases and high cure rates. Moreover, it normally took two months for a COVID-19 patient to undergo the process of hospitalisation, isolation during the recovery period, and being discharged from the hospital to the community, so as to ensure the health of the patients and other residents.

The Information Bureau fully leveraged its functions by actively supporting the Government's pandemic policies. Through a wide range of platforms, it provided immediate dissemination of pandemic information and news. A total of 111 live broadcasts of press conferences, more than a thousand press releases, 461 infographics related to pandemic prevention and 53 promotional videos related to pandemic policies were produced, enabling the public to receive up-to-date information about the pandemic, and pandemic prevention work by various government departments.

In 2021, Macao twice entered the state of immediate COVID-19 prevention, from 3 August to 10 August and from 25 September to 15 October. During these periods, the Information Bureau's official website published 1,017 Chinese-, 588 Portuguese- and 318 English-language press releases; 19 Chinese-, 18 Portuguese- and 14 English-language infographics; and produced and published 38 Chinese-, 13 Portuguese- and three English-language videos.

The Facebook page on the pandemic managed by the Information Bureau became one of the crucial platforms for promptly delivering official information during the pandemic, to reassure the public. In 2021, the Facebook page published 5,243 posts, including 4,625 infographics and 618 video clips (101 of which were live broadcasts).

To prevent COVID-19 from entering the community through imported goods, especially imported cold-chain food, in 2021 the Municipal Affairs Bureau adjusted the pandemic prevention measures regarding imported cold-chain food, to strengthen three anti-epidemic frontlines – goods, environment and workers.

Those measures included implementation of “disinfection of all outer packaging and inspection of all inner packaging” cold-chain food preventive arrangements; formulation of contingency plans for cold-chain food testing positive in different circumstances, and completion of a pandemic prevention drill; establishment of a contingency plan for pandemic prevention in wholesale markets, and conduct pandemic prevention drill with eight departments and the industry; and upgrade of the contingency level for pandemic prevention of cold-chain and live food, and minimise the risk of disease outbreaks and spread.

In 2021, the Municipal Affairs Bureau tested more than 64,000 random samples from food and the environment; all yielded negative nucleic acid results.

Meanwhile, in supporting the Health Bureau's pandemic prevention measures, the Municipal Affairs Bureau conducted thorough cleaning and disinfection of residential buildings of the confirmed cases, and nearby areas. Moreover, it aligned with the work of the livelihood support

group and provided basic living and food supplies to the residents of the red code and yellow code zones during lockdown. In 2021, the Municipal Affairs Bureau provided 7,900 contingent food packs, and about 98,000 hot packed meals, and assisted with transferring resources on approximately 1,900 occasions.

## Targeted and Normalised Pandemic Prevention for Resuming Normal Daily Life

In 2021, the Health Bureau made timely adjustments to the pandemic prevention measures, in response to developments with the pandemic. The major measures included:

- Modified and renovated isolation wards to provide 266 high-standard isolation beds; and formulated contingency plans;
- Commenced a regular nucleic acid test programme in cooperation with third-party institutions, to enhance Macao's testing capacity. As at the end of 2021, a total of 10,800,000 samples had been tested;
- Ensured all residents and domestic helpers in Macao could buy one mask per day for pandemic prevention use. As at 31 December 2021, approximately 230 million masks had been sold;
- Strengthened border quarantine measures for inbound travellers from different regions, including by launching an electronic health reporting and health declaration system, and implementing border quarantine measures such as body temperature screening and medical observations; and tightened immigration policies based on actual situations; and
- Strengthened promotion of pandemic prevention in the community through a series of measures, such as briefing sessions, pandemic prevention guidelines and videos, press conferences, phone inquiry hotlines, community advice announcements and forming the Anti-epidemic Support Volunteer Reserve Team, to increase public awareness of hygiene education and health protection, and facilitate cooperation between all sectors on a timely basis, to prevent virus transmission in the community.

To prevent transmission of COVID-19 in Macao, the Macao Government Tourist Office followed the Chief Executive's order to enforce closures of bars, dance halls, karaoke venues, sauna, massage establishments and health clubs from 5 August to 17 August, and from 6 October to 18 October. During the periods, the MGTO also sent officers for ongoing inspections and monitoring. After the reopening of these establishments, inspectors were also sent to ensure that the establishments continued to observe pandemic prevention measures.

The MGTO also worked with multiple departments by providing pandemic prevention vehicles at various border checkpoints, to pick up parties who were at risk, and transfer them to designated quarantine stations and medical observation hotels. At the end of 2021, close-loop management was implemented for drivers operating the medical observation routes. These "close-loop drivers" were checked in to the medical observation hotels, to prevent the virus entering the community.

## Innovative Breakthrough in Guangdong-Macao Regional Cooperation on Hengqin Development



Regional cooperation serves as an important driver for Macao’s economic development, with a new breakthrough achieved in 2021.

### “Four New” Layouts for Better Integration into Overall National Development

On 5 September 2021, the Central People’s Government announced the Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (hereinafter referred to as the Master Plan), marking a new phase of the extensive Guangdong-Macao cooperation with mutual discussions, joint construction, joint administration and shared benefits for the development in Hengqin, and providing guidance for the construction of the Macao-Zhuhai Axis in the Greater Bay Area and the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone.

On 17 September, the plaque of the administrative body of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was officially unveiled, marking a new stage of Hengqin development. The Vice Premier of the State Council, Han Zheng, extended his best wishes for the better development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, which will contribute to the steady implementation of “One country, two systems” with Macao characteristics.

The MSAR Government warmly welcomed and expressed its heartfelt gratitude for the

introduction of the Master Plan, and will actively seize the opportunities arising through the Master Plan, for Macao to inject new impetus into planning the long-term development of Macao.

The construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is a major national strategy under the planning, deployment and advancement of President Xi Jinping, who attaches great importance to the development of Hengqin, and has paid six visits to Macao and four visits to Hengqin within 10 years. President Xi stressed that the development of Hengqin through the joint efforts of Zhuhai and Macao helps to broaden the scope of and injects new impetus for Macao's long-term development.

The construction of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is a major pioneering project to reinforce the implementation of "One country, two systems", which is conducive to advancing the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, serving as an important means of deepening reform and building a new, open economic system, thereby benefiting Macao's long-term development and integration into the overall national development.

The Master Plan contains 29 articles that cover a wealth of innovative policies and measures, closely following the main theme of "promoting adequate economic diversification in Macao" and establishing four strategic positions of a new platform for Macao's adequate economic diversification, a new space for Macao people to live and work, a new enriched demonstration of realising "One country, two systems", and new high ground for fostering the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Master Plan specifies the development of nascent industries that promote adequate economic diversification in Macao, including four major sectors – science and technology research and development and high-end manufacturing; traditional Chinese medicine and other Macao-branded industries; cultural tourism, conventions and exhibitions, commerce and trade; and modern financial services – in the hope of gradually solving the long-standing problem of Macao's uniform economic structure.

Regarding science and technology research and development and high-end manufacturing, the Government will develop industries such as integrated circuits, big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT) and biomedicine, and establish a technological innovation and transformation centre in the hope of achieving breakthroughs in such fields, and overcoming factors hampering the development of Macao's technological industries.

Regarding traditional Chinese medicine and other Macao-branded industries, the Master Plan proposes allowing the use of "Products inspected by Macao", "Production supervised by Macao" or "Designed by Macao" labels for traditional Chinese medicine products, and food and health products made in the intensive cooperation zone, with the approval and registration processes in Macao. It also proposes simplifying the approval process for listing Macao's traditional Chinese medicines for external use in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area, and prioritising the evaluation of licences for and approval of new pharmaceutical products that are produced in Macao and conform with relevant regulations.

In terms of the development of culture and tourism, conventions and exhibitions, and commercial and trade industries, the Government will develop tourism industries including leisure and vacation,

conventions and exhibitions, and sports event tourism, and supplementary health services industries such as leisure and nourishment, rehabilitation, and medical tourism in the intensive cooperation zone. It will also foster the development of the convention and exhibition industry, through providing convenient immigration measures for participants of cross-border conventions and exhibitions, thus creating an exhibition platform with international influence. As one of the pillar industries of Macao, tourism can complement and foster synergies with Hengqin's tourism industry, bringing new opportunities and creating a new platform for the integrated development of cultural and tourism industries in Guangdong and Macao.

The modern financial services industry is in its early stages in Macao. In addition to its strong supporting role in promoting adequate economic diversification, the industry is also highlighted in the Master Plan, which suggests leveraging Macao's role as a window to Portuguese-speaking countries and supporting the establishment of a Sino-Portuguese financial services platform in the intensive cooperation zone. The Master plan also proposes a series of financial support policies spanning capital application, cross-border Renminbi services, mutual establishment of institutions and cross-border insurance, to broaden the scope for the development of Macao's modern financial services industry.

To build a new home for Macao residents that is favourable for living and work, as one of the four major missions of the Master Plan, the Government will provide extensive support and increase convenience for Macao residents through tax incentives, construction of Macao New Neighbourhood project and a medical complex, and infrastructural interconnectivity, benefiting Macao residents in education, employment, entrepreneurship and living in the intensive cooperation zone, thus creating a favourable environment for living and working akin to Macao.

The Master Plan proposes: “encourage Macao residents to be employed or to start businesses”, “strengthen cooperation with Macao in social wellbeing and livelihoods” and “promote infrastructural interconnectivity” with multiple policies to assist Macao residents in various ways.

The Master Plan specifies the development of Macao New Neighbourhood – an important comprehensive livelihood project jointly undertaken by Zhuhai and Macao, integrating residential, educational and medical functions – to gradually match Macao's educational, medical and social services, realising the synergy in cross-border public services and social security between the two places, and creating a cross-border living environment with comprehensive support that is familiar to Macao residents.

Enriching the new showcase of realising “One country, two systems” means firmly adhering to the principle of “one country” and leveraging the advantages of “two systems”. Based on the special regulatory system and development of the intensive cooperation zone with separate management lines, original constraints and barriers will be broken, and full use will be made of Macao's positioning as a separate customs territory and an international free trade port with networks of external connections. Combining Hengqin's spatial and resource advantages, the Government will promote the connection of rules and mechanisms between Hengqin and Macao, and establish a system for highly convenient market access to achieve efficient and convenient flows of personnel, goods, capital and information, together with a higher level of market integration to realise a new leap forward.

Regarding the new high ground for fostering the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Master Plan clearly states that under the leadership of the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Guangdong and Macao will jointly establish the Administrative Committee of the Intensive Cooperation Zone for constructing a sound new system of joint construction, mutual discussions, joint administration and shared benefits between Guangdong and Macao, which will coordinate and decide on major planning, policies and projects, and important personnel appointments and dismissals in the intensive cooperation zone within its terms of reference. The Administrative Committee of the Intensive Cooperation Zone will be co-led by the Governor of Guangdong Province and the Chief Executive of the Macao SAR.

The Master Plan sets out three development goals to be achieved in phases. By 2035, the mechanism for the integrated development of Macao and Hengqin will be improved, and the goal of promoting adequate economic diversification will be achieved.

In delivering the Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2021, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng stated that in accordance with the planning by the Central People's Government, the MSAR Government will implement the proposal for development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in a pragmatic manner. With an open and innovative mindset, an innovative cooperation zone combining the advantages of "two systems" will be created, which strongly integrates with international standards, facilitates Macao's adequate economic diversification, and serves the opening-up of the nation.

The establishment of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is of great significance in promoting adequate economic diversification of Macao, benefiting the livelihoods and employment of Macao residents, facilitating the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and enriching the implementation of "One country, two systems".

The Government will work with all sectors of society, to accurately interpret and implement the Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, and strive for the intensive cooperation zone to start well.

## **Establishment of the Working Committee for Integration into National Development**

To coordinate the MSAR Government's engagement in the establishment of the country's "Belt and Road" initiative and the short-, medium- and long-term overall designs and work plans of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Chief Executive issued an order to establish the Working Committee for Integration into National Development.

The Committee's duties include:

- Coordinating the MSAR Government's engagement in constructing the country's "Belt and Road" initiative and the short-, medium- and long-term overall designs and work plans of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, recommending the commencement of related research to support policymaking;
- Conducting research on the MSAR Government's promotion of One Centre (world tourism

and leisure centre), One Platform (commercial and trade services platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries) and One Base (multi-cultural exchange and cooperation base with an emphasis on Chinese culture) with related policymaking and implementation of strategies and measures;

- Devising annual work schedules and supervising their implementation; and
- Setting out principles and guidelines for planned activities.

The Working Committee reports to and is chaired by the Chief Executive. The establishment of the Working Committee for Integration into National Development aims to strengthen the top-down approach and coordination, leveraging Macao's unique advantages on participating in and assisting the development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, while giving full play to the advantages of "One country, two systems", to pragmatically deepen and optimise cooperation with sister provinces and cities in mainland China.

### **Fully Commencing the Macao New Neighbourhood Project in Hengqin**

The Macao New Neighbourhood project in Hengqin commenced construction in early 2021, which is a comprehensive livelihood project that integrates quality housing, education, health, and social services, creating a new space for the convenience of the livelihoods and employment of Macao residents.

The 19-storey to 26-storey residential buildings of the Macao New Neighbourhood project in Hengqin will provide approximately 4,000 residential units for sale, over 200 rental units for talented people, and about 60 commercial units. The project is progressing well and is expected to be completed by August 2023.

### **Expediting Infrastructure Development in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin**

To improve the convenient linkage of Macao and mainland China cities with the high-speed railway system, and accelerate transport infrastructure interconnection, the construction of the LRT Hengqin Line commenced on 18 March 2021, which strives for completion within four years. The bridge connecting the University of Macau and Hengqin Port is now under design and preliminary preparation stage.

As a large-scale public transportation project, the LRT Hengqin Line is of great significance in strengthening cultural exchanges and economic ties between the two places. After completion, the LRT Hengqin Line will realise high-speed public transport connection in the Zhuhai-Macao region, which meets the growing demand of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, improves commuting efficiency, and facilitates the intensive cooperation zone to integrate into the "one-hour living circle" of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

To speed up the infrastructural interconnection of Guangdong and Macao, the new Guangdong-Macao border crossing (Qingmau Checkpoint) commenced operation on 8 September 2021, adopting the "joint inspections for one-stop border crossing" clearance mechanism, with a capacity of

handling 200,000 travellers per day, to facilitate more efficient and convenient passenger clearance and logistics between Guangdong and Macao.

The opening of Qingmau Port serves as another important link between Zhuhai and Macao, which relieves the pressure on Gongbei Port (Border Gate); improves the clearance efficiency of Zhuhai-Macao Port; facilitates the exchange and communication between Guangdong and Macao; and fosters Guangdong-Macao intensive cooperation.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Qingmau Port, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng stated that the opening of the port is of great significance to Macao's society, people's livelihoods, the economy and political environment. The Government will take the opening of Qingmau Port as an opportunity to cooperate with Guangdong Province in good faith to promote efficient, convenient and orderly cross-border flows, furthering the quality construction and development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

## The Economy Recovers and Stabilises as Various Industries Gradually Move Forward



During 2021, due to the fluctuating COVID-19 pandemic, Macao's economic recovery faced uncertainties and repeated challenges. As all sectors and industries had been greatly affected since 2020, the public had to bear unprecedented pressure. Despite an increase in the unemployment rate and an ongoing deficit in the Government's finances, Macao's economy still showed signs of recovery through fluctuating challenges, readjusting its development trend from neutral to stable and maintaining social harmony and stability, compared to the situation in 2020. The annual GDP

was 239.4 billion patacas, representing an increase of 18 percent in real terms.

## **Multi-faceted Support for SMEs to Boost the Economy and Increase Consumption**

To maintain market vitality and reduce residents' economic burdens, on 15 March 2021 the Government launched the "2021 Scheme to Guarantee Employment, Stabilise the Economy and Care for People's Livelihoods", and announced the measures to be launched in April, including the Wealth Partaking Scheme, a programme to boost local consumption (the Electronic Consumption Benefits Plan, benefits for the elderly and the "Stay, Dine and See Macao" programme), an upgrade to arrangements for occupational skills training, and tax relief and other measures related to people's welfare.

The Electronic Consumption Benefits Plan distributed a start-up fund of 5,000 patacas and a discount grant of 3,000 patacas to each Macao resident. The plan was implemented from 1 June to 31 December 2021, with a total expenditure of 5.27 billion patacas, and about 66.7 percent of the Consumption Benefits – 3.52 billion patacas – then flowed into SMEs, thus benefiting various industries.

In response to the impact of the pandemic from August to October, the Government launched eight supportive emergency measures with immediate effect from 11 October, including financial assistance to businesses, rent waivers for government-owned properties, concessionary tax benefits, and support to business owners and employees. Eligibility for applying for the SME Assistance Programme was relaxed to "one year after establishment"; the scheme to provide interest subsidies on bank loans for SMEs was reintroduced; and the temporary measure concerning repayment periods for various assistance schemes was extended to 31 January 2023. The Government effectively supported enterprises and residents with solving cash flow problems; used fiscal reserves to launch short-term counter-cyclical credit lines to support banks in meeting local financing needs; and made temporary arrangements for a "Principal Payment Holiday Scheme" to relieve financial pressure on residents.

In 2021, on the basis of the 2020 programme for promoting accredited shops with local characteristics, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau launched a "Taipa Feature Tour" and a "Coloane Feature Tour", and enhanced publicity so more accredited shops with local characteristics could benefit. During the second and the fourth quarters, 32 new Southeast Asian restaurants and 80 North District restaurants were added to the programme, so that more than 200 accredited outlets were included in the programme, adding to the 100 outlets in the Rua de Cinco de Outubro neighbourhood and the Islands District that were included in the first two phases.

Moreover, the Government supported small and medium-sized enterprises with improving their application of technology and management levels, and implemented a subsidy scheme to encourage and support enterprises with upgrading and development.

The Government supported the United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macao in launching an electronic back-office funding scheme for the catering industry, strengthened door-to-door standardised and certified comprehensive support services, and offered courses to help SMEs with improving their management. The Government also encouraged brand building for

Macao products, promoted “Made in Macao” through online platforms, and facilitated the export of Macao-made products through CEPA policies and measures.

The Government facilitated development of e-commerce, fostered a new model for local e-commerce, supported the establishment of a live broadcast base in Macao, and supported Macao’s e-commerce industry with strengthening cooperation with mainland China in training, events and exchanges regarding live broadcasting.

In addition, the Monetary Authority and financial institutions introduced a “Simple Pay” integrated payment service in the first quarter of 2021, and provided support for the Government’s introduction of financial assistance measures.

By the end of 2021, more than 90 percent of merchants in Macao had upgraded to Simple Pay. During the year, the annual transaction volume of local mobile payment services reached 18.52 billion patacas – three times the total of 6.33 billion patacas in 2020.

## **Matching and Referrals Adopted to Ensure Prioritised Employment for Macao Citizens**

In 2021, during the economic downturn, the Government strived to ensure prioritised employment for local residents. The Labour Affairs Bureau continued providing several employment support services that had been introduced or were ongoing in 2020 – including the subsidised training scheme, industry-specific matching sessions, and youth internship programmes – to help residents affected by pandemic to re-enter the job market as soon as possible. Through revisions to the subsidised training scheme, the scope of subsidies was expanded and the application requirements were optimised. Since the subsidised training scheme was launched in September 2020, till 31 December 2021, more than 8,200 people participated in the scheme. In 2021, a total of 3,423 people were employed through the assistance schemes.

Income subsidies were provided to eligible employees with disabilities through the “Supplementary Work Income Subsidy Scheme for Employees with Disabilities”. Through the “Priority Window of Employment Services for the Elderly”, prioritised registration and personalised employment support services were offered to job seekers aged 65 or above. Also, in response to changes in the labour market, the number of non-local employees was timely adjusted.

The Government supported youth employment and career planning in various ways, and helped make young people aware of the development of new economic formats in mainland China. For the first time, the Government cooperated with well-known mainland China enterprises to launch an internship programme, through which young Macao people would gain work experience in mainland China. A total of 17 young people were selected to join three-month internships in various cities in Guangdong and Fujian, enabling fresh graduates of tertiary educational institutions to strengthen their employment competitiveness.

In June 2021, the Government launched the “Create Better Job Prospects” scheme, and received 1,874 internship positions offered by 42 enterprises. A total of 552 people were admitted for this internship scheme, with 178 of the interns subsequently receiving invitations for employment.

In addition, the Government implemented public infrastructure investment in an orderly manner.

In 2021, more than 300 public infrastructure projects of various sizes were launched, creating some 3,000 jobs. The annual public infrastructure investment budget was 16.38 billion patacas.

## Actively Boosting Tourism Recovery and Deepening “Tourism+” Crossover Synergy



In 2021, the Government actively boosted tourism recovery through the “Plan to expand tourist sources, revitalise the economy, and protect employment”. The number of inbound visitors during 2021 was 7,705,943, representing an increase of 30.7 percent compared to the figure in 2020.

In order to attract visitors to Macao and encourage them to stay longer, from September 2020 to 31 December 2021 the Macao Government Tourist Office offered discounts to tourists through electronic consumption vouchers. A total of 2.84 million hotel vouchers were distributed, leading to bookings for 648,506 nights of accommodation, with a value of 439 million yuan. The consumption voucher scheme offered a total discount value of 48.97 million yuan, stimulating total consumption of 1.121 billion yuan, with a leverage ratio of 22.91. A total of 5.686 million air ticket vouchers were distributed, and 276,000 air tickets were redeemed, resulting in bookings with a total value of 170 million patacas.

In April, the Macao Government Tourist Office launched “Stay, Dine and See Macao”, to create employment opportunities for the tourism industry through the “welfare-to-work scheme” approach. The scheme provided a local tourism subsidy of 280 patacas and a hotel accommodation subsidy of 200 patacas to every Macao resident. As of 31 December, 32 routes were launched, with participation by 534 tour bus drivers, 451 local tour guides, 169 travel agencies, 69 hotels and

guesthouses, and 534 coaches (including wheelchair accessible coaches). In all, 40,175 residents registered for local tours, 28,640 hotel packages were sold, and there were 112,227 participants in local tours and hotel packages that were sold.

In May, the Macao Government Tourist Office launched “Macao Highlights Tour” in the tourist market. As of 31 December, 187 people had signed up for the tour, and 76 people had completed the tour.

Three e-commerce skills workshops were held in two phases, to introduce the development of e-commerce platforms and application skills to more than 350 local industry representatives, helping the tourism industry to develop online promotions and sales channels. A famous online travel portal in mainland China – Ctrip, launched a flagship webpage, “Planet”, which accumulated nearly 90,000 fans from its launch on 1 June till the end of 2021. The webpage published more than 60 feature articles on Macao, and displayed more than 100 Macao products.

The Government also increased efforts to promote synergy between tourism and different industries, and continued deepening the “Tourism+” crossover synergy. There was particular emphasis on promoting related work through Tourism+ Conventions and Exhibitions, Tourism+ e-commerce, Tourism+ Culture and Creativity, and Tourism+ Sports. In December 2021, the first “Light up Macao Drone Gala” was held during the Macao Light Festival 2021, and the “Tour Macao FUN Fair” series was jointly organised with local associations, to boost the community economy.

In 2021, the Government held a succession of large-scale “Macao Week” roadshows in Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing, and launched multi-channel online and offline promotions. Each event offered travel discounts worth about 100 million yuan on air tickets, accommodation, catering, and tourism products, to attract tourists. The five “Macao Week” events attracted more than 1.91 million visitors, while the cumulative number of views for live broadcasts and replays by internet KOLs (key opinion leaders) was nearly 560 million. The number of views through various promotional channels exceeded 5.3 billion, driving transactions totalling about 340 million patacas.

## **Industrial Diversification Continues with Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Innovative Technology and Financial Services**

In 2021, the Government promulgated the Law on Pharmaceutical Activities in the Field of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Registration of Traditional Chinese Medicines, to create favourable conditions for fostering development of the traditional Chinese medicine industry. The Guangdong-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park has developed and produced eight types of Chinese medicine with significant curative effects for medical institutions, which have commenced clinical application.

With the “Transformation Base for Traditional Chinese Medicine Scientific and Technological Achievements in the Greater Bay Area”, the Government strengthened cooperation among the industrial, academic and research and development sectors, and encouraged renowned Chinese medicine companies in mainland China to cooperate with scientific research teams in Macao, in developing classic Chinese medicine prescriptions and product upgrades.

By September 2021, the Guangdong-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park had completed registrations for 213 enterprises, 52 of which were Macao companies; and 102 enterprises had established offices in the park, including 31 Macao companies. Moreover, many major “Big Health” projects had been completed or were nearly finalised, while several Chinese medicine factories in Macao had commenced production or were under construction.

Regarding promoting internationalisation of traditional Chinese medicine, the Government continued using the model of promoting medicine through medical treatment services to promote registration and trading of traditional Chinese medicine products in Portuguese-speaking countries, and facilitate sales and marketing of registered products in Mozambique; and held the first online business matchmaking event in the Brazilian market.

In 2021, the Government continued enhancing hardware and software infrastructure for financial services, to foster development of the modern financial industry. The Monetary Authority of Macao worked with banks and payment institutions to establish the first stage of the “Fast Payment System” (FPS) in Macao, built the “Financial Infrastructure Data Centre” in the cloud computing centre, continued reviewing and following up on a number of major financial laws amendment or drafting work, and followed up regarding legislation of the Trust Law.

The Government prioritised the development of the bond market, accelerated cultivation of financial talents, improved bond market infrastructure, completed construction of the Central Securities Depository (CSD) based on the analysis and evaluation of suitable solutions, and strived to establish connections with mainland China and international markets.

In October 2021, the Government successfully invited Guangdong Provincial Government to issue bonds in Macao.

Regarding the development of science and technology industries, the law on the Tax Benefits Scheme for Companies Operating Scientific and Technological Innovation Businesses came into effect on 1 April 2021. The industrial, academic and research sectors achieved positive results, and a batch of subsidised projects was successfully transformed for industrial purposes.

The Government promoted cooperation between University of Macau (UM) and local information technology enterprises, to create a platform for cooperation in research between industries and academia, and strengthened training in the field of intellectual property.

Through reviews of classification, focusing on applied projects and supporting key areas, the Government provided targeted funding to guide Macao’s scientific research towards a focus on applied science. Initially, a total of 101 projects received funding.

The Government aligned with the national innovation development strategy and supported Macao’s integration into the national system for innovation. The China Association for Science and Technology and the Science and Technology Exchange and Cooperation Committee of the MSAR Government promoted exchanges and cooperation between Macao and mainland China in innovation, entrepreneurship, scientific research and other fields through a mechanism for cooperation.

## Converging Social Consensus to Achieve the Second Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR



In 2021, with the aim of further aligning with the country’s 14th Five-Year Plan, leveraging and consolidating Macao’s competitiveness and advantages, and seizing the opportunities to integrate into the overall national development plan, the MSAR Government compiled a consultation document based on initial research findings, and officially announced the Second Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government (2021–2025) (“The 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR”) after listening to and considering opinions collected from various sectors and all walks of life, in order to formulate an overall blueprint for Macao’s economic and social development in the next five years. All Macao people will join hands to promote the stable and long-lasting successful practice of “One country, two systems” with Macao characteristics.

In the five years from 2021 to 2025, the Macao SAR will implement the principle of “One country, two systems”, and seize the strategic opportunities of national development. The 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR defines the directions of Macao’s economic and social development, and governs the future policy priorities of the Macao SAR Government.

The Government issued the consultation document on the 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR on 13 September, and conducted a 60-day public consultation from 15 September to 13 November.

During the consultation period, the MSAR Government held nine sessions to listen to opinions from the general public, grassroots communities, consultative bodies, professional organisations and various sectors concerning Macao’s development. Through telephone messages, emails, faxes, postal mails, online messages, media reports or editorials, and new media and radio programmes, opinions and advice from all walks of life in Macao were also collected.

According to the summary report on the consultation, the consultation on the 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR received widespread attention and active participation from society. A total of 3,166 opinions were received through 787 submissions. The public generally supports the Government's consultation document on the 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR, with a support rate of 76.2 percent.

On 16 December 2021, after considering opinions collected from all sectors, the MSAR Government officially announced the Second Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the MSAR Government (2021–2025), delineating various major tasks to be undertaken during the period.

The 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR is based on the national 14th Five-Year Plan, Macao's first Five-Year Development Plan, the actual circumstances of Macao, and perseverance in adopting solutions to problems, including expediting adequate economic diversification, optimising social and livelihood-related projects, deepening the development of a liveable city, improving public governance and integrating into overall national development.

By 2025, the contents of Macao as a world tourism and leisure centre will be enriched; the functions of Macao as an economic and trading service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries will be expanded; there will be steady progress with the establishment of a multi-cultural exchange and cooperation base with an emphasis on Chinese culture; adequate economic diversification will be substantially achieved; people's livelihoods will be continuously improving; cultural life will be enhanced; the quality of government administration will be optimised; and the laws and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security will be perfected on an ongoing basis. Macao will further integrate into the overall national development plan; the interim goals for the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will be realised; the preliminary roadmap for integrating Hengqin and Macao will be created; and Macao's impetus for development, vitality and competitiveness will be strengthened on an ongoing basis.

In accordance with the 2nd Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR, during 2021 the MSAR Government continued optimising policy measures and services related to people's livelihoods, including housing, healthcare and social security.

## **Working on Housing Policy to Solve Housing Problems**

The issue of housing is the top priority of the Government's policy agenda, and is accorded high priority among the work of the administration. The Government's core housing policy is to establish the housing ladder, provide and ensure the basic living conditions of local residents, and help people to solve their housing problems according to their financial abilities and housing needs.

With the aim of steadily implementing the housing ladder policy through expediting the construction of public housing, construction of the Mong Tak Building of the Mong Ha public housing project was completed on 19 July 2021, providing 768 public housing units. The Housing Bureau arranged for the first batch of 60 eligible families to sign rental contracts, collect keys and move into their allotted units.

As of the end of 2021, more than 4,000 regular applications for public housing were received; 804 families were allocated public housing units. The Toi San and Venceslau de Moraes public housing projects are under construction and will provide 2,100 public housing units upon completion, to help meet demand for public housing.

Regarding Home-Ownership Scheme Housing: the four-month period for applying for Home-Ownership Scheme Housing commenced on 14 July 2021, involving a total of 5,254 flats in five land lots from A1 to A4 and A12 in the New Urban Zone Area A. These comprised the first batch of Home-Ownership Scheme Housing units after the amended Home-Ownership Scheme Housing Law came into effect. A total of 11,707 applications were received. On 13 July, the showroom for the housing units was opened for the public to visit by appointment.

Regarding the Housing Plan for the Sandwich Class: the summary report on the public consultation on the Housing Plan for the Sandwich Class was announced on 28 April. A total of 28,608 opinions had been received through 2,307 submissions. More than 90 percent (92.6 percent) supported the Government's introduction of the sandwich class housing policy; more than 60 percent of the opinions agreed with the definition of sandwich class as "People whose income exceeds the ceiling for Home-Ownership Scheme Housing eligibility; and the Housing Plan for the Sandwich Class can consider lower priority applications for Home-Ownership Scheme Housing". It is believed that the Housing Plan for the Sandwich Class can alleviate some of the demand for Home-Ownership Scheme Housing. Subsequently, the MSAR Government will commence drafting the related law, based on the views collected through the public consultation.

The pilot project on the senior housing complex aims to help elderly people with financial ability, but live in old buildings without elevators, to solve the problems they face in walking up and down flights of stairs, thus helping them get out and about and improving their quality of life. The pilot project commenced at the end of 2020 and is expected to be completed in 2023. The senior housing complex will commence operation in 2024, providing around 1,815 studio apartments.

In 2021, to better prepare a plan for the senior housing complex, from January to April related departments conducted surveys through social service organisations and elderly service organisations with people over 60 years old who live in aging buildings without elevators, to collect views on their eligibility, service expectations and intention to apply. In all, 606 valid questionnaires were collected.

To help the elderly and the general public to gain a better understanding of the design and configuration of the senior housing complex, a showroom was opened to the public on 13 July 2021, to demonstrate the single-bed and double-bed units according to the floor areas of the apartments, and the standard delivery requirements. Drafting of the allocation guidelines, procedures, rules for moving in and by-laws has also commenced.

The Government will strike the right balance between the development of public housing, Home Ownership Scheme housing units, housing for the elderly, sandwich-class housing and private housing, to set out Macao's overall housing policy in accordance with market demands.

## **Refining the Public Medical System with a New Operating Mode**

The Islands District Medical Complex is a major construction project for Macao's medical system. It is expected to be completed in 2022 and will commence operations in phases in 2023, opening

new horizons for Macao's medical system.

In 2021, in preparation for the opening, the Government defined the positioning and operation mode of the complex, and confirmed to invite renowned organisations in the mainland China to assist in the operation, with the aim of improving services in public hospitals with the new operation mode, providing residents with better medical services and greater access to healthcare services by introducing new services and high-end medical and healthcare services, and providing a platform to nurture local healthcare professionals and elevate the standards of specialist services.

On 15 September, the Health Bureau held a press conference on the result findings of a study on optimising the medical service model of the Islands District Medical Complex conducted by a team of researchers from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong.

The research team presented four feasible models and, after a comprehensive evaluation, recommended the Government adopt a public-private partnership model. Positioning the Islands District Medical Complex as a public hospital, the operation, management and provision of services can be commissioned by a third-party organisation, thereby introducing an innovative management model, to foster mutual development with the existing medical system, and enhance the operational efficiency of the Islands District Medical Complex and increase access to healthcare services, so that residents do not need to travel to other places for medical treatment.

Referred by the National Health Commission, the MSAR Government decided to collaborate with the Peking Union Medical College Hospital, which will assist in the operation, management and provision of services of the Islands District Medical Complex.

On 27 October, the working group for the Islands District Medical Complex held a press conference to announce the project plan, and stress that the Islands District Medical Complex is defined as a public hospital, and Macao residents will continue to enjoy existing medical benefits.

On 15 December, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng witnessed the signing of a memorandum of cooperation regarding the Islands District Medical Complex between the MSAR Government and the Peking Union Medical College Hospital. After signing the memorandum, the MSAR Government introduced related legislation in accordance with the local legal system. After the bill is passed by the Legislative Assembly, the project will be implemented in accordance with the framework set out in the memorandum of cooperation.

The launch of the Islands District Medical Complex project can provide residents with better medical services, nurture local healthcare professionals, and elevate the standards of specialist services. In addition, the MSAR Government and the operation team will explore providing medical services at different levels, develop the "Big Health Industry", and explore the feasibility of "tourism + medical care", to create opportunities for promoting diversified economic development of Macao.

## **Enhancing Retirement Benefits with the Central Provident Fund**

The MSAR Government continued actively promoting the Central Provident Fund, to strengthen protection for residents after retirement. As of September 2021, 264 employers had joined the Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund, about 24,000 employees had joined the joint provident fund scheme, and about 75,000 residents had individual provident fund schemes. These figures

show that residents are concerned about their retirement protection, and are becoming aware of the importance of early planning and accumulating retirement reserves.

The Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund System Review Report was released on 29 October, and noted that the Government had appropriated a total of more than 28.6 billion patacas from 2010 to the end of 2020. An account owner can be allocated funds and income, up to a total of 86,910 patacas, which lays the foundation for constructing the system.

In the three years since the implementation of the contributory system, the participation, the amount of pension funds and the returns on investment have all continued to grow, indicating that the system was operating smoothly and had delivered results. Conditions have already been met for moving towards mandatory implementation of the system.

However, the emergence of COVID-19 impacted Macao's economy. The MSAR Government was recommended to set 2021 to 2023 as a three-year observation period and, depending on the economic recovery, set up two plans – one with a five-year, the other with a seven-year preparation period – and implement the Mandatory Central Provident Fund System in 2026 or 2028.

## Responding to Social Needs in a Timely Manner through Executive–Legislature Communications and Interactions



During the fourth session of the sixth Legislative Assembly, from 16 October 2020 to 15 October 2021, a total of 35 plenary meetings and 142 committee meetings were held, with 22 laws, one resolution and 32 simple-majority resolutions passed during the plenary meetings.

## Fulfilment of Legislative Function:

Regarding public security:

- Law No. 25/2020 on Amendments to Law No. 1/2001 on the Unitary Police Service of the MSAR, and Law No. 26/2020 on Amendments to Law No. 9/2002 on the Fundamental Internal Security Law of the MSAR were passed, to modify the roles and functions of the Unitary Police Service regarding civil protection, and to reform the structure and constitution of Macao's internal security system; and
- Law No. 16/2021 on the legal system regarding MSAR's border control, stay and residence permits was also passed, to regulate all immigration-related issues in an integrated way, reinforce border control and measures, and enhance the image of a safe tourism city.

Regarding public administration:

- Law No. 2/2021 on Amendments to Law No. 14/2009 on the Rank and Grade System for Civil Servants was passed, thereby streamlining ranks and grades as well as examination arrangements, to drive an increase in work efficiency of all civil servants;
- Law No. 7/2021 on Amendments to Law No. 7/2006 on Code of Practice for Prison Guard Service was also passed, thereby forming three new ranks and adding a police service officer training program run by the Academy of Macao Public Security Forces, to enhance prison guards' career prospects;
- Law No. 13/2021 on the public security forces and public security department personnel code of practice was passed, to build a sensible ranking system, modify the promotion ladder, and refine the disciplinary and incentive systems, for more effective management of public security forces; and
- Law No. 5/2021 on Amendments to Decree-Law No. 122/84/M dated 15 December, on public works expenditure and goods and services procurement systems, was passed, to refine the Government's procurement work, including by revision of threshold amounts throughout the procurement procedures; and an official announcement was made on the Chinese version of the decree-law.

Regarding social and livelihood-related services:

- Law No. 6/2021 on the public wet market management system was passed, thereby empowering the Municipal Affairs Bureau with the authority to manage public wet markets, introducing stall allocations via public bids, and specifying the duties of licensees;
- Law No. 9/2021 on the consumer rights protection law was passed, thereby enhancing consumer rights protection and curbing improper business practices;
- Law No. 14/2021 on the legal system for urban construction was passed, to support the latest trends in the development of civil engineering, and in particular specify the duties of related entities and the authority of all departments in charge of civil engineering projects, as well as simplifying the approval of public works; and

- Law No. 15/2021 on the legal system for building and venue fire safety was passed, to formulate the system of qualifications regarding fire safety, introduce “duty of self-protection” and fill in gaps in the technical requirements regarding fire safety.

Regarding tax issues:

- Law No. 24/2020 on Amendment of Stamp Duty Regulations and Stamp Duty Payment Schedule was passed, thereby scrapping fiscal stamps and outdated tax types, taxing stamp duty on ceding right-of-use of real estate venues, encouraging the use of arbitration to solve lease-related conflicts with tax concessions, and reinforcing monitoring efforts and law enforcement by the taxation authority; and
- Law No. 1/2021 on the system for taxation of enterprises engaging in technological innovation was passed, to attract more foreign technological innovation enterprises to come to Macao through various tax concession policies, to better drive the implementation of the administrative approach of “promoting technological innovation for construction of a smart city”.

Regarding tourism:

- Law No. 8/2021- Law on the Operation of Hotel Premises – was passed, clearly specifying that Macao Government Tourist Office is responsible for the licensing and operations of restaurants, casual catering venues, bars, dance halls and food plaza stalls inside hotel premises, and approving the establishment of common rooms with beds for lease inside inexpensive accommodation premises, with a view to meeting the demand for diverse tourist accommodation. Moreover, the law introduced new measures supporting one-stop permit applications and temporary operating permits.

Regarding education and public hygiene:

- Law No. 4/2021 on Amendments to Decree-Law No. 67/99/M dated 1 November, approving the Education and Youth Development Bureau code of practice for teachers, was passed to review the evaluation, workloads, and rights and responsibilities of teachers, thereby raising the professional status of public school teachers and ensuring the sustained development of non-tertiary education in Macao; and
- Law No. 11/2021 – Law on Pharmaceutical Activities in the Field of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Registration of Traditional Chinese Medicines – was passed to align with the country’s Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area measures that are beneficial to Macao and the Chinese medicine and the MSAR’s policy on developing the pharmaceutical industry, including by filling in gaps in the legal framework regarding registration of over-the-counter traditional Chinese medicines, the establishment of a pharmaceutical production system aligned with mainland China and international standards, as well as an all-encompassing regulatory system aligned with the management of modern traditional Chinese medicine.

To fulfil international duties:

- Law No. 22/2020, and Law No. 10/2021 on Amendments to Law 17/2009 on Prohibiting the Illegal Production, Trafficking and Consumption of Narcotics and Psychoactive

Drugs, respectively, were passed via urgent procedures, thereby recognising 20 new internationally restricted substances, to prevent and combat drug-related crimes in accordance with neighbouring regions and international society.

Lastly, Law No. 12/2021 on Amendments to Law No. 5/1999 on the Use and Protection of the National Flag, National Emblem and National Anthem was passed, to practically execute a resolution passed during the 22nd Session of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress that amended the Law of the People's Republic of China on the National Flag and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the National Emblem, in order to fulfil the constitutional duty of safeguarding the dignity of the national emblem and logo.

All the above 19 laws were proposed by the Government.

### **Fulfilment of Supervisory Function**

In accordance with the authority conferred by the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, the Legislative Assembly performed its supervisory duties regarding the government budget and public finances, including by:

- Passing Law No. 23/2020 on Amendments to the 2019 Government Budget, to revise the Government Budget for the fiscal year;
- Passing Law No. 27/2020 on the 2021 Government Budget (the budget was later revised via Law No. 3/2021, Law No. 17/2021 and Law No. 18/2021, reflecting the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and providing the local community with a series of financial support measures); and
- Deliberating on the Government's Reports on Budget Implementation for 2019 and the Commissioner of Audit's Report 2019 proposed by the Government, and listening to and discussing the 2021 Policy Address delivered by the Chief Executive.

To promote Executive-Legislative communications and interactions, Chief Executive Question and Answer sessions were held in April and August. The former saw direct dialogues between legislators and the Chief Executive regarding public administration topics concerning housing, employment, human resources, social development and planning, development of the financial services industry, economic recovery; the latter adopted written interactions due to the pandemic, to continue performing the active function of the Legislative Assembly in expressing issues concerning social needs and livelihoods.

To better listen to and collect opinions from legislators, the Government held briefing sessions on the study of the New Urban Zone Area A and on Wai Long Public Housing project; and held a briefing on the scoring system under the Home-Ownership Scheme Housing Law, and on adverse weather forecasting in Macao.

To gain a deeper understanding of the current status of various public work projects, upon invitations made during legislative sessions, legislators visited the construction site of the fourth Macao-Taipa cross-harbour bridge, Mong Ha public housing and Mong Ha Stadium in New Urban Zone Area A, and conducted onsite inspections of the senior housing in Mong Ha community, as well as the demonstration units of the Home-Ownership Scheme housing site and temporary

housing in New Urban Zone Area A.

During the legislative sessions, legislators gave 316 pre-agenda speeches in plenary meetings, on topics such as housing policy, public transportation, medicine and hygiene, culture and education, employment protection, environmental protection, regional cooperation and the marine economy.

In addition, legislators issued 702 written questions and 89 oral questions, and the Legislative Assembly initiated 10 plenary meetings to address the oral questions.

Consequently, follow-up work was conducted by the Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concession Affairs, the Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs and the Follow-up Committee for Public Administration Affairs, which were proactive regarding major issues and the applicability of relevant laws in public administration. Eight reports were produced, as follows:

- Follow-up on the use of Macao Foundation funds and status of consolidation of autonomous fund subsidies related to education;
- Follow-up on the interim report on the implementation of the MSAR budget 2020 and Q2 PIDDA budget implementation report;
- Follow-up on the 2020 fiscal year Q3 PIDDA budget implementation report;
- Follow-up on the 2020 fiscal year Q4 PIDDA budget implementation report;
- Follow-up on the 2021 fiscal year Q1 PIDDA budget implementation report;
- Follow-up on the contract concessions of gaming operations;
- Follow-up on the procedures regarding skilled immigration and investment immigration as stipulated by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute; and
- Follow-up on the effectiveness of drainage infrastructure during rainstorms and typhoons.

The duties of the legislative authority lie in fully reflecting and hearing various opinions, suggestions and criticisms from citizens, and responding to social needs in a timely manner. During the legislative session, legislators received citizens in-person over 26 times, based on a roster system; and 448 cases of public opinions and suggestions were communicated to the Legislative Assembly via personal visits, phone or email.

In addition, the Legislative Assembly received seven petitions from individuals and groups, and handled them appropriately, considering the actual situations.

## **CCAC Supports Clean Election and CA Strengthens Exchanges and Cooperation**

In 2021, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) dedicated all its efforts to implementing the Government's major policies, focusing on upholding the integrity of elections. The CCAC deployed in advance and invested significant resources to enhance monitoring, to ensure the fairness, impartiality, openness and integrity of the seventh Legislative Assembly Election.

While monitoring the election activities between 8 March and 12 September, the CCAC



commenced promotion of a clean election, provided various platforms and channels for election complaints and reports, and proactively inspected and monitored venues at high risk of bribery, and combated detected illegal activities related to the election. The CCAC carried out 13,089 patrols, and initiated 28 cases (including four for in-depth investigation and two on minor violations).

During the period, the CCAC management team invited all candidates in the direct election to a presentation on the details related to election bribery and special notes for the campaign and the publicity period stipulated in the Legislative Assembly Election Law. After the successful completion of the Legislative Assembly Election, the CCAC promptly investigated and processed the illegal election-related cases in accordance with the law. Comprehensive prevention and combating of corruption before, during and after the election were achieved.

Meanwhile, the CCAC did not slacken work on overseeing the Government's administrative work. In 2021, the CCAC received 1,463 inquiries and 712 complaints and reports (including 179 complaints and reports regarding the election). Among the complaints and reports<sup>1</sup>, 119 cases meeting requirements for initiating investigations were transferred to the Anti-Corruption Bureau, including seven co-investigation cases and 28 cases relating to the election; 226 cases were transferred to the Ombudsman Bureau, including 221 for special investigations and five for full investigations; 310 cases without conditions for initiating investigations were transferred to the Complaint Management Centre, and directly closed or referred to authorised departments.

Including cases transferred from 2020, the CCAC concluded 294 cases in 2021. Among the cases concluded by the Anti-Corruption Bureau, 13 were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office; among the cases concluded by the Directorate of Ombudsman Services, there were 26 with requests for follow-ups by relevant departments; and 143 cases that could not be followed up were closed as they were not under the CCAC's purview, or did not have indications of contravention of laws and regulations, or lacked sufficient information.

<sup>1</sup> Some complaints and reports were combined for processing.

The CCAC opened seven co-investigation cases with requests from non-local counterparts. Including transferred cases from 2020, the CCAC co-investigated 16 cases. Among them, seven cases were closed while the other nine cases were still under investigation. The CCAC made three requests for co-investigation to non-local counterparts, one of which was made to the mainland China authority, while the other two were made to the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong.

Regarding promotion and education, the CCAC organised many themed promotional activities to spread the message about a clean election to all walks of life, including a debate contest with the theme “integrity”, the “Clean Election” city orienteering contest to urge public participation, the “Community Roadshow on a Clean Election 2021”, some 50 campus tour exhibitions on a clean election, 32 drama tour performances promoting a clean election, nine clean election talks and various WeChat quiz games.

In addition, the CCAC held 437 talks and seminars, which were attended by 28,720 participants, including civil servants, private sector employees, the general public, young people and students of tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools and kindergartens. The CCAC also organised the recognition ceremony for the “Dissemination of Integrity in Schools” - Recruitment of Teenage Ambassadors of Honesty and Integrity in Practice Project in Schools, the Local Activity Experience Day for Excellent Teams and the Integrity Volunteer Recognition Ceremony 2021.

Regarding external exchanges, as the pandemic was relatively stable in mainland China and Macao at the beginning of 2021, representatives of the CCAC paid two visits to nine cities of the Greater Bay Area to meet with the Disciplinary Committee and Supervision Committee of Guangdong province and other cities, and visited relevant anti-corruption education bases and other enterprises that are models of integrity.

Even in the face of the ever-changing pandemic, in 2021, the CCAC still attended conferences, seminars and trainings, mostly by online participation. In February, a video conference was held with the Commissioner of ICAC of Hong Kong, Peh Yun-lu, to discuss and exchange information on anti-corruption work in Macao and Hong Kong, and cooperation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Regarding international conferences, the CCAC attended the International Ombudsman Institute Asian Regional Meeting, the International Ombudsman Institute General Assembly, the Asia/Pacific Group of Money Laundering Member Plenary Meeting, and the Asia Regional Council Officer Election of the International Ombudsman Institute, via online participation. On the invitation of the National Supervisory Commission, the CCAC participated in the first Global Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Agency Action Network Conference; and on the invitation of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the MSAR, the CCAC attended the 9th Meeting of States Parties of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

In 2022, the CCAC will continue promoting the importance of probity and honesty to all walks of life, based on the direction for development proposed in the Second Five-Year Plan of the Macao SAR. In line with the policy direction for the Macao SAR to integrate into overall national development, the CCAC will also be proactive in combating and preventing corruption at all levels through innovative, information-based methods. The CCAC will also strengthen supervision of complaints to the ombudsman, and raise public awareness of complaints to the ombudsman through publicity and education.



In 2021, the CA released the Commissioner of Audit's Report 2020 and the second performance report on the Management of Macao Investment and Development Limited.

The second performance report on the Management of Macao Investment and Development Limited revealed that – in order to develop an innovation and entrepreneurship base for young people of Guangdong and Macao; the headquarters of Parafuturo de Macau in Zhongshan; a training and exchange centre for young entrepreneurs from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao; a distribution centre for products from Portuguese-speaking countries; and an exhibition centre for products of Macao characteristics – in October 2016, Parafuturo de Macau proposed the acquisition of the Torch International Conference Centre, despite knowing that the property deed had not been issued.

Subsequently, in July 2018, Parafuturo de Macau formulated a “lease-to-own” strategy, to lease the four-storey Conference Centre for a period of 18 years (with a one-year rent-free period), without having carried out due diligence on the use and operations of the centre and the related legal consequences.

The report also revealed that, in addition to the above series of work targets, Parafuturo de Macau also participated in a special financial services business. In 2017, Parafuturo de Macau invested 18 million patacas in a financial institution to become its shareholder, holding a 15 percent stake. The institution's businesses included establishing a trading platform for companies in mainland China that have assets abroad, and issuing bonds for SMEs in Macao.

Before making this important decision, Parafuturo de Macau did not carry out comprehensive and adequate analysis of both internal and external conditions. At the time of submitting the proposal, the company management was unable to provide the Board of Directors with indications of critical factors such as advantages, disadvantages, risks and prerequisites of the project.

Since Macao's legislation does not stipulate comprehensive regulations regarding transactions

involving financial assets, the Government has established some restrictions on certain aspects related to the nature and functioning of related institutions. Legal regulation is essential for a solid financial infrastructure, however, at present, there is no legislation to regulate the financial market, nor a platform for trading financial assets. Given the lack of a sound supervision system, financial institutions must be more prudent in their actions in order to minimise potential risks.

In addition, being responsible for regional cooperation between Zhongshan and Macao, the decision to choose Parafuturo de Macau to participate in the establishment of a financial institution was inappropriate.

Besides auditing work, the CA also participated in the following activities in 2021:

- In April, the Commissioner of Audit, Ho Veng On, led a delegation to Beijing for a visit to the National Audit Office, and met with the Commissioner of Audit, Hou Kai, to exchange opinions on audit-related information technology infrastructure, policy implementation for ongoing audits, auditor training, and regional cooperation and promotion of exchanges between audit institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.
- In September, as a member of the China Audit Delegation, the Commissioner of Audit, Ho Weng On, participated online in the 15th Assembly of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) held in Bangkok, Thailand. Ho Weng On joined a group discussion with Qin Boyong of the National Audit Office as the key speaker, in which he discussed the functions of government audit work in the national system and modernisation, and learned about the latest experiences of various countries in assisting governments to promote good governance during the “new normal”. It was hoped that through observation and learning, the CA staff would keep their mission in mind, continue striving for improvements, and make great efforts to foster the high-quality development of audit work.
- In October, the CA appointed representatives as observers to participate in the 5th Forum of Audit Institutions with Judicial Insights and the 11th General Assembly of Supreme Audit Organisations of the Portuguese-speaking Countries Alliance in Lisbon, Portugal. The forum focused on ways audit institutions with judicial insight functions and powers could more effectively combat fraud and corruption. The participants agreed on the importance of strengthening exchanges of audit experience, and exploring multilateral cooperation.
- With concern and support from the National Audit Office, the CA appointed two members as observers to regularly attend the working meetings of the National Audit Informatisation and Standardization Technical Committee (SAC/TC341) in 2021. The committee, approved and established by the Standardization Administration in 2008, is a national professional and technical work organisation that carries out standardisation work in audit informatisation and audit-related accounting informatisation and management informatisation. Invited to the committee for the first time, the CA gained an invaluable learning opportunity. Relevant technology and experience would help to improve the institutional system, standard system and operation mechanism, promoting innovation in modes of working, and improving the efficiency of implementing standard systems in future.

In promoting computer-assisted audit, with assistance from the Computer Technology Centre of the National Audit Office the CA completed the upgrade of the “Auditor Office” system, and developed new “Electronic Data-aided Tools”, to facilitate audit supervision of all public sectors according to the law.

According to the Order of Commissioner of Audit No. 2/2019, departments have to prepare and submit designated electronic files related to their account management, and accounting and financial management information for the previous financial year, in accordance with electronic data formats or template forms specified by the CA.

Since several organisations were using the data-aided tools for the first time, in March the CA arranged an introduction session on the “Electronic Data-aided Tools”, focusing on explaining the specific operation of the “Aided tools for export and import of CSV files” and the “Electronic Data-aided Tools”, helping the departments to ensure that their electronic CSV data conforms with the required format and specifications, while deepening participants’ understanding of the system’s features.

Regarding publicity and promotion, the CA continued organising seminars on audit culture, to promote the message of good use of public resources for public department staff, cadets of the Academy of Macao Public Security Forces attending promotion courses, and new government recruits.

## Growing Trend of Electronic Judicial Systems and Strengthening of People-oriented Justice



## Number of Cases Admitted by the Three-tier Court System

2021	Court of Final Appeal	Court of Second Instance	The Primary Court (including the Examining Magistracy)	The Administrative Court	Total
Cases admitted	171	1,111	16,809	136	<b>18,227</b>
Cases concluded	161	1,200	16,843	139	<b>18,343</b>
Cases pending	108	437	12,289	117	<b>12,951</b>

The majority of the cases admitted to the three-tier court system were criminal and criminal labour cases, which totalled 6,099 (excluding Examining Magistracy cases). Ranking second were civil cases and civil labour cases, which totalled 4,076. There were also 364 administrative cases, and 7,688 other cases.

## Law Promotion and Legal Consulting Services

To strengthen the promotion of the law and foster transparency of the judicial system, starting from 9 October 2013, the court has been issuing press releases about typical concluded cases, and publishing them on the websites of the court and the Government Information Bureau. Various media may republish and report on these cases, which can hopefully promote legal awareness and law abidance in society, and inform the public regarding the judicial approaches and methods for settling various disputes. As at the end of 2021, an accumulated total of 873 articles had been published, 134 of which were published in 2020.

In 2021, the Primary Court continued to provide consulting services, with details as follows:

2021	The Criminal Court	The Civil Court	The Small Claims Court	Total
Number of enquiries received	1,823	4,218	1,966	<b>8,007</b>
Number of cases involved	1,921	3,849	1,966	<b>7,736</b>
Number of enquiries directly handled	1,842	3,681	1,966	<b>7,489</b>
Number of enquiries transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office	74	121	---	<b>195</b>
Number of enquiries transferred to other departments	5	47	---	<b>52</b>
Telephone enquiries	455	867	---	<b>1,322</b>

## Legal Assistance and Enforcement

Regarding delivery of judicial writs and assistance in investigations and evidence collection in civil and commercial cases, in 2021 the Court of Final Appeal received 193 judicial writs from mainland China courts, and delivered 71 judicial writs to mainland China courts on behalf of the courts in Macao.

In 2021, the Court of Second Instance received 18 requests for reviewing and endorsing judgments made by mainland China courts or arbiters; they included three judgments endorsed by the Court of Second Instance that were sent to the Primary Court for enforcement.

On 7 January 2013, the MSAR Government and the Hong Kong SAR Government signed the Arrangement Concerning Reciprocal Recognition and Enforcement of Arbitral Awards between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macao Special Administrative Region, which came into effect on 16 December 2013. As at the end of 2021, the Court of Second Instance had admitted four cases involving requests for the confirmation of arbitral decisions.

Besides, the MSAR Government and the HKSAR Government signed the Arrangement for Mutual Service of Judicial Documents in Civil and Commercial Cases between the Macao Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on 5 December 2017, which came into effect on 1 August 2020. As at the end of 2021, the Court of Final Appeal had received 13 judicial writs from Hong Kong courts, and delivered 22 judicial writs to Hong Kong courts on behalf of courts in Macao.

## Declarations of Assets and Interests

In 2021, the Court of Final Appeal followed the stipulations in Law No.11/2003, which had been amended according to Law No.1/2013, in the process of receiving individuals for the declaration of assets and interests. It opened 190 individual dossiers, received 1,930 documents for the declaration of assets and interests that involved 1,498 people, and sorted and updated the contents of the individual dossiers according to the law.

According to the stipulations in the aforementioned Law No. 11/2003, the Office of the Court of Final Appeal has uploaded Part IV of the disclosure document on asset declarations to the website of the Courts of the Macao SAR, ensuring it is available in the public domain as required by law. In 2021, the disclosure documents (Part IV) of 409 individual dossiers involving 304 people were published online. There is a total of 4,076 accumulated disclosure documents, involving 891 people.

## Summary of the Work by and Outlook for the MSAR Courts

In 2021, although the MSAR Government was still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the three-tier court system continued to function normally and efficiently. The number of admitted and concluded cases were both similar to the previous year, with a total of 18,227 cases admitted during the year, and a record of under 20,000 cases for the second consecutive year. Of these cases, 171 were filed with the Court of Final Appeal, 1,111 with the Court of Second Instance, 16,809 with the Primary Court (including the Examining Magistracy), and 136 with the Administrative Court. There were 18,343 concluded cases, of which 161 were concluded by the Court of Final Appeal,

1,200 were concluded by the Court of Second Instance, 16,843 were concluded by the Primary Court (including Examining Magistracy cases), and 139 were concluded by the Administrative Court. There were 12,951 pending cases, indicating a decrease for the fourth consecutive year; of these, 108 cases were further pending by the Court of Final Appeal; 437 were from the Court of Second Instance; 12,289 pending cases were from the Primary Court (including Examining Magistracy cases); and 117 pending cases were from the Administrative Court.

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony of the 2021-2022 judicial year, the President of the Court of Final Appeal, Sam Hou Fai, said that the court had begun perfecting various software and hardware facilities during the previous Judicial Year:

1. Enhancing judicial efficiency and making progress with the digitalisation of judicial operations

The court facilitated the amendments to the “Arrangements for Mutual Entrustment in Civil and Commercial Matters for the Service of Judicial Documents and Investigation and Obtainment of Evidence Between the Courts in Mainland China and the Macao Special Administrative Region”, to replace the delivery of judicial documents and obtainment of evidence in cooperation with mainland China via post with electronic channels. The time required was shortened by 30 days on average, thus further enhancing judicial efficiency.

Also, the court cooperated with the MSAR Government in preparations for introducing an electronic litigation system. Two e-services for courts were launched in the first phase, enabling electronic submissions of litigation documents and settlements of litigation fees. It is believed that the implementation not only responds to society’s needs and enhances judicial efficiency, but can also provide experience for the launch of electronic notifications and electronic summonses in the next phase, further intensifying the digitalisation of judicial operations.

2. Enhancing the quality of judiciary staff, striving to commence promotion and training for supporting members of the judiciary

The Legal and Judicial Training Centre and the National Judges College organised national education training courses to support members of the judiciary in the MSAR Government, with the aim of strengthening their understanding of national education in terms of politics, economics, history and culture, as well as the Constitutional and the Basic Law, which allows them to comprehensively and accurately understand and implement the principles of “One country, two systems”.

The appointment and training course for supervisory personnel in the three-tier court system also commenced. This marked the first time of organising this kind of courses after Macao’s reunification with the motherland. Upon completion of the programme in the second half of 2022, all general secretaries, assistant general secretaries and chief secretaries will be officially appointed on a regular basis. This will change the situation in which all supervisory personnel in the judiciary had been fulfilling their duties on an acting basis since reunification.

3. Induction training programme for newly inaugurated judicial officers of courts

In order to cultivate newly inaugurated judicial officers of courts, the sixth induction

training programme for judicial officers of courts and the Public Prosecutions Office will commence. This marks the first year of organising such a programme after the amendments to the related induction training system. It is estimated that 20 participating students will officially start training in early 2022, and will join the team of judicial officers of courts in 2024. Apart from making preparations for a possible manpower shortage caused by some judges meeting retirement conditions in the coming few years, this also satisfies the demand for rapid future development of the Greater Bay Area, especially the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, providing a safeguard in terms of judicial human resources.

4. Improving working conditions of the judiciary, constructing the three-tier court building

With the support from the MSAR Government, the plan for constructing the three-tier court building has been almost finalised, and entered the design stage. The soil exploration work for construction of the Court of Second Instance Building and the Primary Court Building have also commenced. It is expected that some judicial bodies that have operated separately in different commercial buildings will truly become history in the near future.



The overall operations of the Macao Special Administrative Region Public Prosecution Office in 2021 can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Compared with the previous year, the number of criminal cases, civil cases and administrative cases accepted by the Public Prosecution Office increased. However, the numbers of labour cases and cases involved in the trial procedures of the Court of Second Instance and Court of Final Appeal decreased. As the number of land dispute cases dropped significantly, the Public Prosecution Office will continue upholding the principles of legality and objectivity

in exercising its functions and powers in accordance with the law, and strive to maintain the social order and public interest of Macao.

- (2) In response to illegal acts that disrupted pandemic prevention work, the Public Prosecution Office and functional departments worked closely together to perform their duties in accordance with the law; strengthened the procedures of accountability for those who violated anti-pandemic laws and regulations; protected the health and safety of Macao citizens by legal means; and safeguarded the overall public interest of Macao.
- (3) With the impact of COVID-19, global travel has been restricted. As social life transformed to adopt online approaches, the number of cybercrime cases registered in 2021 significantly increased. These included computer crime cases involving theft of credit card information, lobbying victims to invest in online gambling, and online dating scams. There was also a significant increase in the number of online “naked chat” blackmail cases conducted online. It is necessary to strengthen the public’s vigilance and security awareness, and minimise the cybercrime space for criminals as much as possible.
- (4) The number of registered cases of crimes related to infringement of sexual freedom and autonomy has been on the rise in recent years, with cases involving minors as victims accounting for more than half the total number of registered sex crimes. Offences with pornographic materials involving minors accounted for the majority of the latter, with more than twice as many cases as in 2020. In response, the Public Prosecution Office will continue cracking down on crimes of sexual assault against minors, and maintain communication with all walks of life to help minors increase their awareness of and ability to protect themselves, and jointly safeguard the physical and mental health as well as legitimate rights and interests of minors.
- (5) Due to the pandemic, the number of tourists decreased significantly. The number of criminal cases related to illegal gambling decreased during the pandemic, however, seizing the opportunity arising from some casino VIP rooms suspending services and reducing cash exchanges, crimes involving the use of counterfeit currency for illegal currency exchange fraud (commonly known as “practice banknotes”) have occurred more frequently. Violent crimes arising from illegal currency exchange activities also increased. In order to effectively combat the chaos of illegal exchanges, and correspond with the police’s response strategy of combining prevention and control, the Public Prosecution Office has used litigation procedures to intensify efforts to crack down on illegal exchange activities, creating a safe social environment for the recovery of the tourism industry.
- (6) Also with the impact of the pandemic, global economic activities have slowed down, and the numbers of reports of suspicious transaction or reports of money laundering have dropped significantly, and the rate of initiating cases related to money laundering crimes also dropped. In response to this situation, the Public Prosecution Office will continue maintaining close contact with functional departments and enhance capabilities for supervising prevention of and investigating money laundering, and strengthen international or regional criminal judicial cooperation to collect related criminal evidence, in order to effectively prevent and curb money laundering activities, and effectively maintain the safety and stability of the Macao SAR’s financial system.

- (7) The numbers of international and regional criminal, civil and commercial judicial assistance cases have returned to pre-pandemic levels. In order to continuously improve the efficiency and level of judicial assistance, the Public Prosecution Office will continue adhering to the principle of “One country, two systems”, work in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law, and cooperate in creating a legal environment to combat crime. In the field of procuratorial work, the office has contributed to the integration of the Macao SAR into the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and its participation in international affairs.
- (8) In response to the relatively tight human resources of the judicial team due to the retirement of judicial officials in recent years, the Public Prosecution Office will strengthen cooperation with the legal department, and continue improving and fostering a systematic ongoing education system for judicial officials, on the premise of rationally establishing and allocating human resources, to improve the professional quality and practical abilities of judicial officers and their services, and ensure the realisation of justice for the people.
- (9) In order to continuously improve the development of procuratorial information technology, the Public Prosecution Office will continue cooperating with the Procuratorate Technology Information Research Centre of Supreme People’s Procuratorate to implement the overall work policy of the MSAR Government, to foster e-government in the judicial field and strengthen the service principle of judicial convenience for the public, and actively cooperate with and promote the development of electronic litigation procedures in Macao.

In 2021, the number of criminal cases initiated by the Public Prosecution Office was 12,715, 17.17 percent more than the figure of 10,852 in 2020. The number of cases concluded by the Examining Magistracy was 13,199 in 2021, representing a slight decrease of 0.77 percent year-on-year; the number of prosecutions was 3,569, 2.43 percent less than the number of cases in 2020; the number of cases filed was 9,386, representing an increase of 0.09 percent; and the number of cases reopened due to discovery of new evidence was 152, representing an increase of 1.33 percent.

Analysing the above statistics, the top five types of crimes with high numbers of investigations in the region during 2021 were:

- 3,366 theft, robbery and property damage cases (up 0.24 percent year-on-year);
- 1,563 fraud and extortion cases (up 32.23 percent year-on-year);
- 1,377 offences involving physical assault (up 17.39 percent year-on-year);
- 1,232 crimes related to traffic accidents (down 22.83 percent year-on-year); and
- 1,133 illegal immigration and immigration-related crimes (up 32.83 percent year-on-year).

In addition, the Public Prosecutions Office initiated relatively high numbers of investigations of the following crimes:

- 999 computer crimes (up 168.55 percent year-on-year);
- 374 cases of forgery (down 33.92 percent year-on-year);
- 327 cases of crimes against personal freedom (up 48.64 percent year-on-year);

- 297 crimes against public authority (up 33.78 percent year-on-year); and
- 195 crimes involving defamation (up 12.07 percent year-on-year).

In terms of civil and labour legal proceedings, the Public Prosecutions Office initiated 883 civil and labour pre-suit cases, 20.14 percent more than the figure of 735 cases in 2020. Among them, the office investigated 53 maternity or paternity cases, and initiated 92 court actions for minors; and processed 738 proceedings concerning interdiction, disqualification, custody, litigation fees, bankruptcy, mandatory property inventories and settlement of unpaid taxes on behalf of the Finance Services Bureau.

When processing labour cases, in order to reduced time needed when protecting the rights of the relatively disadvantaged working class to the greatest extent, the Public Prosecutions Office aimed to first pursue mediation to resolve disputes for civil labour cases, in accordance with the Labour Procedure Code; in 2021, the Public Prosecutions Office was involved in 520 cases in the Labour Court, 11.56 percent less than the figure of 588 cases in 2020, as follows:

- 289 newly initiated cases involving labour accidents and occupational diseases, 375 cases successfully mediated, and 19 cases requiring litigation due to failure to agree on mediation;
- 231 ordinary labour litigation cases were newly initiated, with 218 cases successfully mediated, while further litigation was required for 12 cases; and
- During 2021, 593 workers were involved in successful mediation procedures conducted by the Public Prosecutions Office, and 34 workers were involved in cases initiated following failure to achieve mediation.

In 2021, the two judicial officers of the Office of the Administrative Court at the Public Prosecutions Office received a total of 134 cases, an increase of 17.54 percent compared to 114 cases from the previous year. These included 90 judicial appeals, 16 litigation cases, and 10 cases involving urgent procedures, and six cases of administration of taxation. The Public Prosecutions Office participated in 12 litigation procedures, five of which involved claims arising from follow-ups to the Government announcing annulled land grants.

In 2021, the Public Prosecutions Office before the Court of Final Appeal and the Court of Second Instance participated in handling the following cases:

- A total of 1,082 criminal, civil and administrative cases in the Court of Second Instance, 13.30 percent less than the figure of 1,248 in 2020; these included three local cases; and
- A total of 163 cases in the Court of Final Appeal, 15.98 percent less than the figure of 194 cases in 2020; these included six local cases.