

A series of events were held to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao). Seizing this opportunity, the Government enhanced support services for cooperation between Chinese and Portuguese enterprises, to act as a platform for promoting exchanges and cooperation in various areas between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

## Consolidating the National Security Barrier and Passing on Core Patriotic Values



To realise long-term national stability, and long-term prosperity and stability of Macao society, safeguarding national security is a must and a common obligation of all Chinese nationals, including Macao citizens. In 2023, the Macao SAR Government diligently implemented the development strategies presented in the report of the 20th National Congress and the spirit of the series of instructions from President Xi Jinping, comprehensively and accurately upheld the principle of “One country, two systems”; firmly safeguarded the sovereignty, security and development interests of the country; and continuously enhanced the legal system and enforcement mechanism to safeguard national security.

### Completing the revision of the Law on Safeguarding National Security to stabilise the foundation of security

In 2023, the Macao SAR Government completed the revision of the Law on Safeguarding National Security and its supporting laws, providing solid legal protection for safeguarding national security.

On the afternoon of 18 May 2023, the Legislative Assembly plenary meeting passed the second reading of the Amendment to Law No. 2/2009 – Law on Safeguarding National Security, which came into effect on 30 May. Compared with the original Law No. 2/2009, the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security has been repositioned from a stand-alone criminal law to an integral part of the foundation, pillar and core legal framework for safeguarding national security in Macao, and now plays a guiding role through a series of conceptual and principled provisions. In order to effectively respond to changes in the situation of crimes against national security, the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security re-establishes the seven offences against national security and adds specific procedural rules and litigation measures, as well as three precautionary measures, thus responding to the overall security risks and threats in a timely and effective manner, and further improving the system of “One country, two systems”, thereby better coordinating and safeguarding the security and development of the country and Macao, and further clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Macao SAR Government and all sectors of society in safeguarding national security.

In June 2023, the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao SAR held its first plenary meeting of the year, which was attended by the Director, Mr Zheng Xincong, and the Deputy Director, Mr Huang Liuquan, of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Macao SAR, in their capacities as National Security Adviser and National Security Technical Adviser, respectively.

The chairman of the committee, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, pointed out that under the new security situation in the new era, the Macao SAR needs to take advantage of the implementation of the newly amended Law on Safeguarding National Security to continuously strengthen patriotism among Macao residents based on the solid foundation that has been established; launch in-depth related promotion and education work; better coordinate security and development; and continuously perfect the system of safeguarding national security in Macao, so as to safeguard national security and the long-term stability of Macao.

### **Amending the Electoral Law and implementing the principle of “patriots governing Macao”**

While comprehensively and correctly implementing the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security, the Macao SAR Government continued to improve and perfect the supporting legislation and law enforcement mechanism necessary for safeguarding national security in Macao, and raise the awareness of national security among different sectors of the community and the general public, so as to leverage the strengths of all walks of life to uphold the constitutional order of the Macao SAR as stipulated in the Constitution and the Basic Law, with a view to thoroughly and accurately realising the overall national security concept.

To further implement the principle of “patriots governing Macao” and in accordance with the recommendations of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election on enhancing the electoral system for the Legislative Assembly, on 15 June the Macao SAR Government launched a public consultation on the amendments to the Chief Executive Election Law and the Legislative Assembly Election Law. During the 45-day consultation period, the Government organised eight consultation sessions, and extensively disseminated information

on the legislative amendments to the community and residents through seminars and radio programmes on social affairs. A total of 571 submissions were received from different sectors through various channels, including letters, in-person submissions, faxes, telephone calls, and other electronic means. Of the 6,112 specific suggestions and proposals, 2,439 were related to the Chief Executive Election Law and 3,673 to the Legislative Assembly Election Law. The Macao SAR Government completed the summary reports on the public consultations on the amendments to the Chief Executive Election Law and the Legislative Assembly Election Law in August and November, respectively.

Based on the collected opinions and suggestions, and after giving due consideration to Macao's actual situation, Law No. 20/2023 – “Amendment to the Chief Executive Election Law” was officially promulgated on 27 December and came into effect on 1 January 2024. Regarding the enhancement of the eligibility requirements for the nominees for the Chief Executive Election and for members of the Chief Executive Election Committee, the Law stipulates that, in order to be eligible for the election to serve as a Chief Executive Election Committee member, a candidate must uphold the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and swear allegiance to the People's Republic of China; and the nominees for the Chief Executive election and the candidates for the election of members of the Election Committee shall not be members of a foreign parliament or government, and the aforementioned persons shall make a declaration of support and allegiance in good faith and sign and submit the declaration, whereas a person who refuses to sign the declaration is ineligible to stand for the election.

In addition, the law establishes a mechanism to ensure the smooth operation of the eligibility vetting procedure; legalises the criteria for vetting eligibility; lists the vetting criteria; and stipulates the National Security Committee's responsibility for vetting whether the nominees and candidates have upheld or sworn allegiance to the Government, and issuing a binding opinion to the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election regarding any candidate who fails to meet such requirements. No statement of objection or judicial appeal can be filed against a decision of the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election that is arrived at through this mechanism.

The law also states that if a nominee or a candidate has been judged in accordance with the law to have failed to uphold the Basic Law or to have no allegiance to the People's Republic of China or the Macao Special Administrative Region in the year in which they stand for the election, or in the five calendar years preceding that year, his or her application will not be accepted. Moreover, the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election is repositioned as a permanent body, in order to assess whether members of the Chief Executive Election Committee meet the legal requirements during their terms of office, and to make timely decisions regarding disqualifications of Election Committee members.

There was satisfactory progress with the amendment to the Legislative Assembly Election Law. On 10 November, the Executive Council concluded discussions on the bill to amend the Legislative Assembly Election Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, and submitted it to the Legislative Assembly for deliberation. The details of the bill included the establishment of a mechanism to ensure the smooth operation of the eligibility vetting procedures, reinforcement of measures combating unlawful conduct, and optimisation of the election process.

## **Maintaining cybersecurity with a national security perspective**

As the internal and external security situation has become increasingly complex and severe, telecommunications fraud, professional hackers, and even hacking activities supported by other countries have continued to pose varying degrees of threats to national security, Macao society and every Macao resident. Cybersecurity has come to the fore among issues concerning safeguarding national security.

On 10 October, the Cyber Security Committee held its annual plenary meeting. The committee chairman, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, highlighted the importance of safeguarding cybersecurity for development in the new era, and requested all departments to view the development of cybersecurity from the perspective of safeguarding national security, accurately comprehend the underlying relationship between development and security, and realise a new security pattern to safeguard the new development pattern.

In this regard, the Macao SAR Government has been actively working with different sectors of the community to consolidate the resources and strengths of all parties, in order to safeguard cybersecurity in tandem with overall national security, to ensure the long-term stable operation of society, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the general public and enterprises.

On 23 November and 24 November, the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre held a cybersecurity incident drill, with participation by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau, Environmental Protection Bureau, Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau, Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau and Health Bureau as supervisory entities, together with 37 key infrastructure operators from eight private sectors, to raise key infrastructure operators' awareness of cybersecurity; strengthen their prevention, response and management capabilities in terms of cybersecurity management and technology; and rationalise the mechanisms and workflows for responding to incidents among the cybersecurity centre, supervisory entities, and operators, thereby safeguarding cybersecurity and protecting the normal functioning of society in Macao. On 7 December, the "2023 Cyber Security Forum" was held, and academics and other experts from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao were invited to deliver talks on various cutting-edge cybersecurity topics, in order to enhance cybersecurity capabilities of key infrastructure operators and continuously enhance Macao's overall security level.

As Macao gradually resumed its full opening to the world after the pandemic, the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre joined with related regulatory entities and operators to hold a cybersecurity drill on 30 January, with the aim of raising cybersecurity awareness in the sea, land, and air transportation sectors, and safeguarding against a variety of cybersecurity risks, in a bid to ensure the safe and smooth operation of various transport services during economic recovery.

## **Deepening patriotic education and strengthening national security awareness**

To further the general public's understanding of national security and the important relationship between safeguarding national security and Macao citizens, the Macao SAR Government has continuously cooperated with different sectors of the community to actively foster promotion of and education on national security.



On 15 April 2023, the 8th National Security Education Day was held. To mark this occasion, the National Security Education Exhibition was jointly held by the Macao Special Administrative Region Government and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR for the sixth consecutive year. Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said in his opening speech that national security was an important factor supporting the harmonious development of Macao society and its multicultural heritage. The Macao SAR Government has also strategically strengthened youth work, and supported young people's better integration into the overall development of the country. The Government has continuously strengthened the patriotic education of young people and enhanced their awareness of national security, to ensure that the splendid traditions of being loyal to our country and to Macao will continue being passed on.

The month-long exhibition received overwhelming support from different sectors of the community. The rich content attracted visits by residents and community organisations, youth organisations, schools, public departments, and public and private organisations, with a total of over 60,138 visitors – setting a new record high tally, and the related website recorded over 1.2 million page views. The exhibition effectively enabled Macao residents to review and understand the connection between the overall national security concept and the security and development of the country and the Macao SAR, as well as the significance of the concept. It enabled visitors, especially the younger generation, to realise that national security is an important prerequisite for the stable development of Macao and the personal well-being of Macao residents, and thus strengthened the national security concept.

In response to the country's new situation and Macao's social development – particularly the new requirements including the practical education on “One country, two systems”, the promotion of the patriotic spirit of Macao SAR citizens, and the proactive safeguarding of the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the country as stipulated in the Patriotic Education Law promulgated

by the country in October – the Macao SAR Government continued deepening cooperation with the education sector, and the related departments continued reaching out to local schools to launch publicity campaigns on the Constitution, the Basic Law of Macao and the Law on Safeguarding National Security, to help young students understand the role and significance of the Law on Safeguarding National Security, the Constitution and the Basic Law of Macao in safeguarding the long-term prosperity and development of Macao as well as its residents’ peaceful livelihoods.

In April 2023, to mark the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, the Macao SAR Government, together with community groups, launched a multimedia publicity campaign spanning over nine months, to promote a deeper understanding of the Basic Law and the principle of “One country, two systems” among different sectors of the community.

Regarding curricula and teaching materials, the education department has continued promoting the implementation of patriotic education in tertiary and non-tertiary education institutions; compiled and published supplementary teaching materials on *Constitutional Education* and local teaching materials on subjects such as *Morals and Civic Duty*; and introduced supplementary teaching materials on National Security Education, with a view to actively nurturing and enhancing Macao students’ sense of patriotism, and strengthening the younger generations’ sense of identity and belonging to the country.

## Continuously Improving People’s Livelihoods and Striving to Ensure People’s Wellbeing

