

Coutinho 'absolutely confident' about dual lawmaker role

Leong Lok Ian

Directly-elected legislator Jose Pereira Coutinho said yesterday he was "absolutely confident" about his ability to handle the challenge of being a lawmaker in both Macau and Portugal.

The lawmaker made the upbeat remark after attending Macau Forum, an open-air debate programme hosted by government broadcaster TDM, in Areia Preta Park.

Coutinho ran in Portugal's general election yesterday as a candidate of the small "Nós, Cidadãos!" (We, the Citizens!) party.

If elected, Coutinho would possibly become the only deputy in the world elected to legislatures in two different countries at the same time. The voting period for Portuguese overseas voters ended on Saturday. Coutinho stood in the "outside Europe" constituency. Members of the Portuguese Diaspora cast their ballots by postal vote.

Speaking to the media yesterday, Coutinho lamented the fact that at least 2,000 potential voters in Macau had been unable to vote due to mistakes made by Portuguese officials, sending their ballot papers to the wrong address.

Coutinho said that despite the unfortunate turn of events, he was glad that he took part in the election, as it was the first time any Portuguese political party actually paid attention to Macau. He added that his action had led to many interesting debates between scholars and experts.

When asked by reporters whether he would leave Macau's political sphere if he was elected,



Legislator-cum-unionist Jose Pereira Coutinho speaks to reporters after attending yesterday's open-air Macau Forum debate programme in Areia Preta Park. Photo: Leong Lok Ian

Coutinho insisted that he was born in Macau, and therefore he wouldn't just abandon ship suddenly. He also pointed out that there isn't any law that forbids him from taking his seat in Lisbon if elected.

However, according to previous Portuguese media reports, some constitutional experts in Portugal have expressed doubts about the suitability of Coutinho's bid for a seat in Assembly of the Republic (parliament) in Lisbon, considering that he is a sitting member of Macau's legislature.

"As a person in the legal sector, I obviously have an advantage over other people, because I can learn the job [as a lawmaker] much quicker," he said, adding "And so I'm absolutely confident that I will be able to do both jobs."

Only Portuguese nationals were entitled to vote in the election. ■

Govt to extend Yat Yuen concession for short period: Leong

Davis Ip

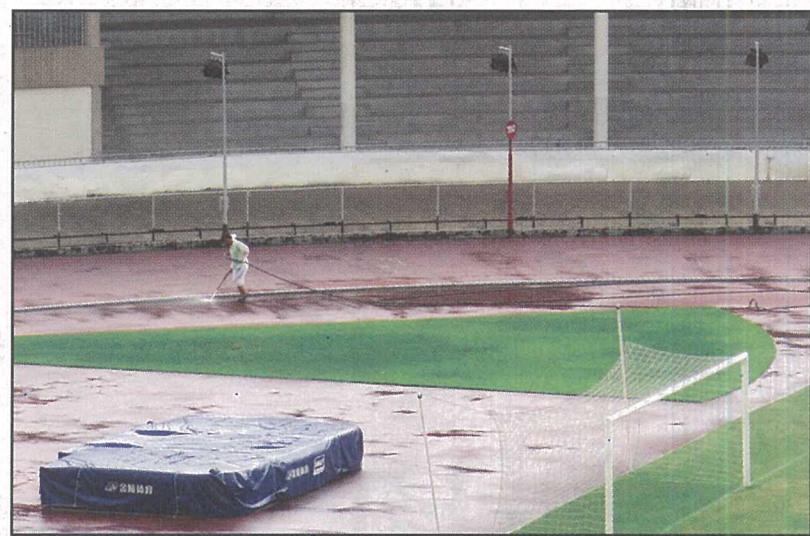
Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong Vai Tac said on National Day he "believed" the government will extend the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome's greyhound racing concession "for a short period" without any change in the current contract terms, adding that the duration of the new concession had yet to be decided.

Leong made the remarks on the sidelines of a National Day reception hosted by the government at Macau Tower on Thursday.

The government has commissioned the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming (ISCG) of the University of Macau (UM) to conduct research into the future of the racetrack whose concession will expire at the end of this year.

"Hopefully, according to the schedule we have set for ourselves, we'll be able to make a decision within a year," Leong said. The policy secretary said a study by an independent research institute would help the government to come up with a better decision on the issue.

On Wednesday night, about 100 people attended a candlelight vigil held by the Macau Society for the



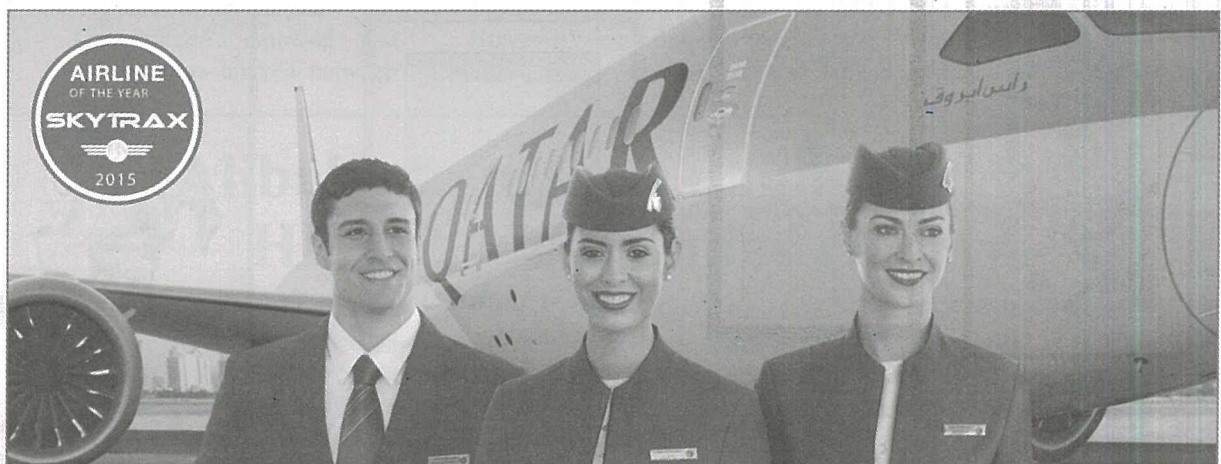
A worker cleans the sports field inside the greyhound racetrack at the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome yesterday. The sports field is used by local schools and associations when no races are held. Photo: Davis Ip

Promotion of Animals (ANIMA) near Nam Van Lake opposite Government Headquarters, urging to government to terminate the city's "cruel" greyhound races. The crowd included many expatriates.

According to the website of the Gaming Inspection and Co-ordination Bureau (DICJ), the Yat Yuen Canidrome recorded gross receipts of 145 million patacas last year, just 0.4 percent of the gaming industry's total.

The racetrack began operations in 1931, but was closed after five years. The track was later taken over by the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome Co. Ltd. and resumed dog racing in 1963. The company is headed by gaming executive-cum-lawmaker Angela Leong On Kei.

All the neutered greyhounds are imported from Australia. Customarily, they are culled when no longer fit to race. ■



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A resident lays pallets to form a temporary "foot bridge" in Avenida de Demetri Cinatti yesterday morning. The No. 3 signal for Typhoon Mujigae was still up late last night. According to the Fire Service, a woman was slightly injured when trying to open a window in a building on the former University of Macau campus during the typhoon. Photo: long Tat Choi