



#### RETROACTIVE FISCAL BENEFITS

The proposal to assist residents who have lost their vehicles during Typhoon Hato will be voted on

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#### CHUI TAK KEI'S PHOTOBIOGRAPHY

A photobiography on Macau's late influential leader Chui Tak Kei will be released to the public on Saturday

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#### TROUBLED CHINESE INSURER RECEIVES BAILOUT

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#### WORLD BRIEFS

**CHINA-KOREA** Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi told North Korea's foreign minister that Beijing supports the North's planned summits with South Korea and the United States.



**INDONESIA** Waters off an Indonesian port city reek like a gas station after an oil spill and fire that killed four people over the weekend, an official said yesterday. More on p12

**THAILAND** The political group that has won every national election since 2001, only to be forced out of power repeatedly by non-electoral means, has taken an initial step on a comeback trail, registering its members in order to contest polls promised for early next year. More on p12



**MYANMAR** Lawyers for two Reuters journalists detained in Myanmar asked a court yesterday to dismiss the case against them, saying the evidence doesn't support the charges. More on p13

**US-PAKISTAN** The United States has placed a small Pakistani political party on its list of foreign terrorist groups, calling it a front for the militants behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks. More on backpage

## Trade dispute grows, China slaps tariffs on US

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## Greyhound gamblers heavy-hearted in last days of Canidrome

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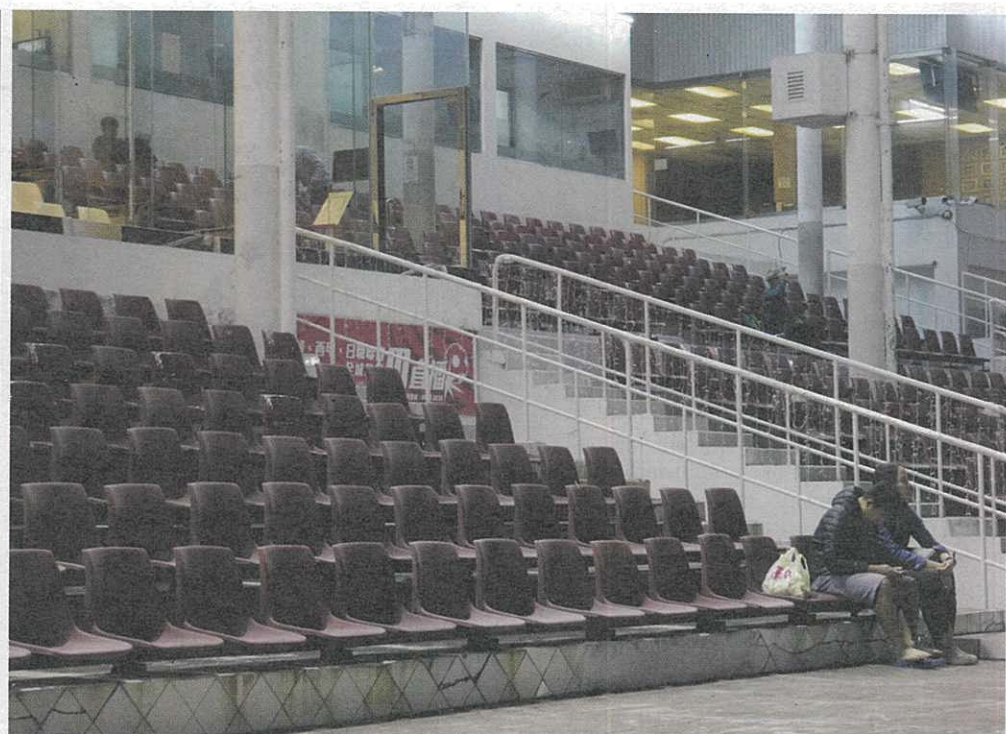


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DANIEL BEITLER



# Greyhound gamblers heavy-hearted in last days of Canidrome

Daniel Beitler, Julie Zhu

**W**HEN the local government presented the Macau (Yat Yuen) Canidrome with an ultimatum in mid-2016 – close down or relocate to another site – most observers assumed that the dog-racing track's days were numbered.

They saw no other viable location for the greyhound racing track, and Angela Leong, consort of casino mogul Stanley Ho and owner of the Canidrome, agreed. She confirmed at the start of this year that the facility would close its doors by July 21, 2018.

But the recent and surprise quarter-century renewal of the Macau Jockey Club's concession – despite the company's financial non-performance – made some observers hint at the possibility that the government could revoke its ultimatum at the final hour.

With just 15 weeks remaining on the 55-year-old concession, the Times took the opportunity to revisit the Canidrome in the hope of documenting its final days.

## A RELIC THAT WILL BE MISSED

A relic of old Macau, the aging facility is in an obvious state of deterioration.

It is a noiseless, motionless crater save for the wailing of its greyhounds and the staging of occasional races to entertain a handful of patrons.

Just two dozen or so visitors patronized the facility on one recent Tuesday night visit; some of them tourists, the others resident regulars.

Its stillness was a stark reminder that the Canidrome is one of the most sparsely-populated

urban sites in one of the world's most densely-populated neighborhoods.

And yet its races will be missed by its patrons, who – be they tourists or residents – say they disapprove with the government's decision to force its closure.

Michael Chan, a local resident in his 40s who lives in the area, said he has been coming to the races for more than 20 years. He said that he was regretting the Canidrome's closure because “it has accompanied us for half a lifetime.”

“This [used] to be a very popular activity,” he told the Times. “There were a lot of people before, then gradually fewer people [came] because the management became worse. I think it is closing because its operation is bad.”

Others were disgruntled by the impending closure.

“Of course I am sad,” answered a sexagenarian local who identified himself as Ao Ieong and said he has wagered on the greyhounds every week for the last 10 years. “Now [the government is] closing the Canidrome, where can we, the Macau people entertain [ourselves]?”

A Taiwanese tourist named You Liao said she thought it was a pity that the racetrack was closing. “It's quite special,” she told the Times. “This is my first time coming here. I heard that it is closing, so I came here to have a look.”

Another Taiwanese tourist, who identified only as Kao, said that his Tuesday night visit was the second he had made to the Canidrome after December last year. “I don't think it is about gambling or not gambling,” he opined. “I think this is a culture, a tradition. [...] It is a pity if it is not kept.”

Kao said that the facility was

exceptional and should be preserved as one of the few places worldwide that still have greyhound racing tracks.

“It is not like horse racing which probably many places have,” said Kao. “For my last trip to Macau, the most impressive thing for me was the dog racing. So I think it is worth keeping.”

Contrarily, a young local by the name of Martin Wan said he was indifferent about the Canidrome's July closure, despite the fact he has been visiting the racetrack for at least five years, because he would migrate to the Jockey Club.

“Actually, I don't feel it is a pity [that] the concession can't be renewed,” he told the Times. “I can also go [to see the] horse racing. [...] It does not matter to me [if it is closed or not].”

**I think this is a culture, a tradition. [...] It is a pity if it is not kept.**

KAO

TAIWANESE TOURIST

## LITTLE BETS, BIG LOSSES

Many critics were astounded in February to find that the government had granted the Macau Jockey Club a 24-year concession as the sole provider of horse racing activities in Macau. They had reasoned that the company's consecutive years of accumulated losses – as well as its alleged failure to generate tax revenue for the government – would have discounted that

possibility.

Could the Canidrome be presented with a similar, surprise renewal?

Local animal rights activist Albano Martins says it won't as the government has already informed the public that the facility will close. Nevertheless, he said, the company doesn't appear to be packing its things just yet.

The financial state of the Canidrome appears broadly similar to that of the Macau Jockey Club.

According to figures from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau, gross revenue from greyhound racing in the territory amounted to MOP205 million in 2012. That has fallen uninterrupted every year since, and in 2017 stood at approximately MOP46 million. Profit for the company in 2015 amounted to just MOP4.8 million, marking a fall of over 80 percent from the previous year.

In 2015, an international campaign to blacklist the Canidrome began to pick up momentum. Spearheaded by Martins, an alliance of international observers came down on the facility, describing it as “the world's deadliest greyhound racetrack,” due to the abnormally high number of euthanized dogs.

A blockade of greyhound imports then contributed to a diminishing number of dogs housed at the racing track and, as a consequence, less frequent races. This may have contributed to the consistent decline in Canidrome revenues.

The Times enquired during its visit as to how much and how often its patrons gamble, and found that few of them were willing to stake a lot on their favorite greyhound.

Of the local residents inter-

viewed, Michael Chan said he bets up to HKD100 per race, Ao Ieong said he bets “normally five patacas or ten patacas,” while Martin Wan only bets “once in a while.”

Most of the tourists did not disclose how much they had gambled, though Kao, the return visitor, said he had bet “all afternoon [...] and then won about HKD200.”

## WHAT NEXT FOR THE GREYHOUNDS?

Today, the most pressing issue ahead of the Canidrome's closure – for those on both sides of the debate – is what will happen to the dogs in its care. It is an issue that escalated into an intense, if short-lived, spat last year between Angela Leong and Albano Martins.

Martins wants a local animal rights association to inherit the greyhounds and prepare them for adoption. But Leong argues that the dogs belong to private owners and therefore the Canidrome company has no right to cede them without the owners' permission. Anyway, she retorted in October last year, why is Martins so interested in acquiring the animals?

Martins contends that the Canidrome is the single largest owner of greyhounds at the facility and is the de facto owner of the rest, under the contractual obligations negotiated between the company and private investors.

Gamblers at the Canidrome say that they are equally concerned about what will happen to the greyhounds once the site shuts down. All of the interviewed residents said it “would be better” for the dogs to be adopted, but highlighted problems with their reputation for making high-maintenance pets.