

MACAU TODAY

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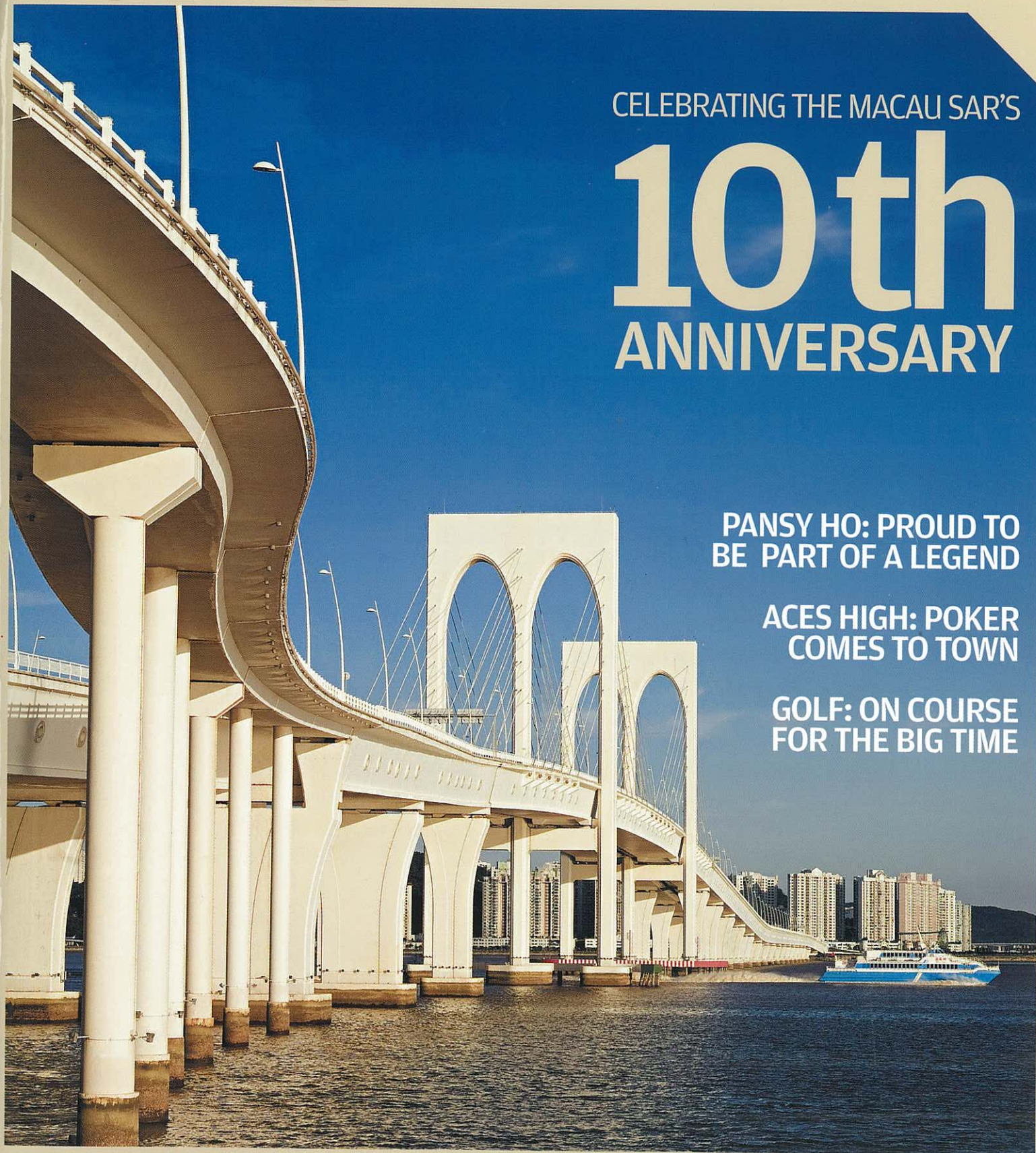
CELEBRATING THE MACAU SAR'S

10th ANNIVERSARY

PANSY HO: PROUD TO
BE PART OF A LEGEND

ACES HIGH: POKER
COMES TO TOWN

GOLF: ON COURSE
FOR THE BIG TIME





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

After leaving a lucrative law practice in Los Angeles, Alan Ho returned in 1991 to join Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM) and take over from his late father, the brother of Stanley Ho Hung-sun, in the hospitality business.

His responsibilities later expanded to include the group's hotels and travel agencies. In 1994, he became executive director of Florinda Hotels International (Holdings) which owns five hotels in Macau, including the Grand Lisboa, and properties in Portugal and San Francisco.

Ho cites the evolution of the hotel industry as probably the single most important component to put Macau on the international tourist map. "From the private sector, there has been an explosion of world-class casinos, hotels, restaurants and shopping malls with boutiques selling luxury brands," he says.

His food and beverage foresight has raised the bar several levels in local dining.

In 2001, he pioneered the opening of Robuchon a Galera, featuring internationally renowned chef Joel Robuchon, which put Macau's dining scene up there with the best of them.

"At the time, most people told me it was foolhardy because Macau was not ready for it," Ho says. "Today, it is the only Western restaurant

with three Michelin stars in Macau. The Lisboa Complex is the only complex in the world which houses three Michelin-starred restaurants - and one with a Michelin bib - under one roof."

Still, one of the things he loves about Macau is its Macanese food. "Since this type of cuisine is really a home cooking type of cuisine, each chef has a different version of the same dish, handed down from mother to daughter," he says. "This is what makes it interesting.

"As Macau modernises, how many descendants of these old Macanese families, with all these wonderful recipes, will want to be in the restaurant business? It remains to be seen.

"Cooking and running a restaurant is a demanding business. I guess there will always be some people with this type of passion, but a modern city also offers many attractive and easier alternatives to make a living. I expect there will be fewer of these wonderful Macanese restaurant as time goes by."

Ho believes the completion of work on the Cotai Strip will give Macau an additional attraction. "But of course this also means that China will have to support us, or else the overcapacity in casinos, hotel rooms and restaurants will drown us," he says. *Prudence Lui*

LOOKING BACK NUNO SARDINHA DA MATA

THE LAW OF CHANGE

Prominent lawyer Nuno Sardinha da Mata, a 20-year veteran of Macau's legal system, believes that for better or worse, the change in gambling laws that allowed for new gambling licences - via concessions and sub-concessions - has "changed the face of Macau".

On balance, he believes the enclave's denizens should be proud of its continental European legal system.

"It has its flaws like any system does," says Mata, "However, its underlying principles are based on respect for human life and the human being."

Macau's "uniqueness" in his view is how it is able to maintain its difference as a special region within China. But he does believe that being a part of China will invariably shape Macau's evolution.

"I do not think it is possible to be part of our world and not be one way or another influenced by China, let alone when you are part of China itself," Mata says. "However, I believe that despite that influence, Macau will still be able to find its own way."

As for legal reform, Mata thinks it is inevitable and that in the short-term, attention may be needed to be given to immigration law amendments, in addition to possible changes to the rules governing the judiciary and the environment.

Nevertheless, such changes should not be simply for the sake of change but should be deliberate and measured.

"Laws always have to evolve and follow real life," Mata says. "So legal reforms are always needed. I just hope that the reforms are carried in a smooth and careful way." *Ajay Shamdasani*