

Govt commissions UM to study dog races

Staff Reporter

Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong Vai Tac said yesterday that the government had commissioned the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming (ISCG) of the University of Macau (UM) to carry out research on the city's greyhound races.

Leong said the study would include the collection of public opinion on the matter, namely what residents think about the future use of the plot of land where the Yat Yuen Canidrome is located.

Talking to reporters at the local airport before leaving for Zhoushan city in Zhejiang province with Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On, Leong said the institute had already started the research.

He also said the government expected the study to be completed within a year.

The Yat Yuen Canidrome is located in the densely populated Fai Chi Kei district and its concession will expire at the end of this year. Commu-

nity representatives have called for its removal to create additional space for public facilities. Residents in the area have also complained about the racetrack's stench and noise.

The government said earlier this month that it would listen to residents' views on the fate of the city's greyhound races which date back to the early 1930s, according to the website of the Gaming Inspection and Co-ordination Bureau (DICJ).

According to DICJ statistics, the Yat Yuen Canidrome recorded gross receipts of 145 million patacas last year, down 18.5 percent year-on-year. The racetrack's betting turnover fell 19.3 percent year-on-year to 630 million patacas last year. The racetrack headed by gaming executive-cum-lawmaker Angela Leong On Kei reported liabilities of 43.6 million patacas at the end of last year.

Asked by reporters before departing for Zhejiang whether the government would consider granting a "short term" concession to the racetrack, Chui said the government



Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On (left) speaks to the press at the airport yesterday, before heading to Zhejiang province on a two-day working visit, while Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong Vai Tac looks on. Photo: Davis Ip

was still working on the matter.

Chui also said that regarding the fate of the city's dog races the government would consider several factors such as its role in diversifying the city's gaming industry, whether it

was suitable for the racetrack to remain in Fai Chi Kei as the community is developing and alternative uses for the plot of land where the races have been held for decades.

"The Yat Yuen Canidrome is

a part of city's diversified gaming industry and has been there for several decades... should we close it immediately?" Chui questioned, adding that it was his understanding that residents have starkly different opinions on the fate of the races.

"Some residents love it...while some want the plot of land to be used for other activities. With the research study we will gain a better understanding of what residents think about the matter," he said, adding that it was a complex issue and the government would study various possibilities.

The Macau Animal Protection Society (ANIMA) has been collecting signatures locally and elsewhere to push the government to terminate the city's dog races, the only place in the Far East where they are still being held. As of last night, the group had collected 339,138 signatures. ANIMA plans to hold a vigil outside Government Headquarters tomorrow.

ANIMA says that scores of greyhounds have been culled by the racetrack over the past decades. ■

Obama, Putin clash over vision for resolving Syrian crisis

UNITED NATIONS – US President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin clashed yesterday over their competing visions for Syria, with Obama urging a political transition to replace the Syrian president but Putin warning it would be a mistake to abandon the current government.

Obama and Putin's dueling speeches at a United Nations General Assembly summit served as a public preview of their private meeting slated for this morning (Macau time). The sit-down was to mark their first face-to-face encounter in nearly a year and comes amid escalating Russian military engagement in Syria.

Obama said he was open to working with Russia, as well as Iran, to bring Syria's civil war to an end. He called for a "managed

transition" that would result in the ouster of Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose forces have clashed

with rebels for more than four years, creating a vacuum for the Islamic State and other extremist groups.



US President Barack Obama (bottom, left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (bottom, right) attend a luncheon hosted by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (bottom, centre) at the United Nations headquarters in New York yesterday. - AP

"We must recognize that there cannot be, after so much bloodshed, so much carnage, a return to the pre-war status quo," Obama said.

Putin, however, urged the world to stick with Assad, arguing that his military is the only viable option for defeating the Islamic State.

"We believe it's a huge mistake to refuse to co-operate with the Syrian authorities, with the government forces, those who are bravely fighting terror face-to-face," Putin said.

Obama and Putin's disparate views of the grim situation in Syria left little indication of how the two countries might work together to end a conflict that has killed more than 250,000 people and resulted in a flood of refugees.

Despite Obama's staunch opposition to Assad remaining in power, the US has struggled to energize a

political process to push him from power. Russia has long been a major obstacle, shielding Assad from UN sanctions and continuing to provide the Syrian government with weapons.

In fact, Russia has appeared to deepen its support for Assad in recent weeks, sending additional military equipment and troops with the justification that it is helping the government fight the Islamic State (IS). The military buildup has confounded US officials, who spent the summer hoping Russia's patience with Assad was waning and political negotiations could be started.

While Putin didn't call out the US by name, he criticized efforts to arm "moderate" rebels in Syria, saying Western-backed fighters have later come to join the IS.

- AP

Macau's oldest & largest circulation English-language newspaper – Your Local Paper in The World's Universal Language

Xi throws support behind UN peacekeeping

President Xi Jinping promised support yesterday for a permanent UN police squad and African peacekeeping as he vowed a peaceful rise for the Asian power.

Full story on p. 5

Catalan vote deepens political standoff in Spain

Separatists in Catalonia vowed yesterday to push on for independence from Spain after winning control of their regional parliament, but the Spanish government promised to keep the country united.

Full story on p. 10

Portugal's ruling coalition may win poll: surveys

Portugal's incumbent centre-right coalition could pull off a wafer-thin victory in Sunday's general election, according to the latest opinion polls.

Full story on p. 11