

## Group holds vigil to push for axing of dog races



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About 100 people attended a candlelight vigil held by the Macau Society for the Protection of Animals (ANIMA) near Nam Van Lake opposite Government Headquarters last night, urging to government to terminate greyhound racing in Macau.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, ANIMA President Albano Martins said dog racing should stop in December.

"We're here because every month around 30 dogs, young and healthy, are killed by the [Yat Yuen] Canidrome," Martins said, adding that the city should no longer "kill animals because of profits".

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

The Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome's concession will expire at the end of this year. On Monday, the government said that it had commissioned the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming (ISCG) of the University of Macau (UM) to carry out research on whether to renew the lease or not.

"The last [concession] contract was [for] 10 years. We've [been] talking about this since 2012. So, over the past three years, [why is it that] the government couldn't order a report from the university? Why order it only now, three months before the concession expires?" Martins asked. He said his organisation had sent several letters about their concerns to the government over the past three years, but had yet to receive any response.

Martins said ANIMA would be able to take care of some of the dogs living at the racetrack, adding that they would send the remaining dogs to the organisation's "friends all over the world". Asked by reporters about what the site should be used for if the racetrack was to be shut down, Martins said the residents in the area should discuss the issue with the government, adding the group hopes that it would be replaced with a green space and an underground car park, but no housing.

According to Martins, 26 cities around the world, including Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US, will also be holding their own candlelight vigils this week to urge the local government to close the racetrack. The global effort was being helped by GREY2K USA Worldwide, a non-profit greyhound protection organisation founded in 2001.

According to a GREY2K USA statement, every greyhound exported from Australia to Macau is eventually culled, considering that the government hasn't any adoption programme in place. It added that according to the racetracks' own records, 30 to 40 greyhounds are imported and the same number is "euthanised" each month.

ANIMA set up an online petition earlier this year, gathering over 300,000 signatures worldwide, urging the government to close the racetrack. The group has slammed the Yat Yuen Canidrome for causing the highest rate of injuries to greyhounds during a race in the world, due to the poor condition of the racetrack.

"We'll try to continue to convince the chief executive," Martins said last night. The racetrack first began operations in 1931, but was closed after five years. The track was then taken over by the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome Co. Ltd. and resumed business in 1963. The company is headed by gaming executive-cum-lawmaker Angela Leong On Kei.

(macaunews/macapost)