

**THE STAFF AT THE RECENTLY INAUGURATED UNION HOSPITAL IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO 400 EMPLOYEES BY THE END OF THE YEAR, HEALTH BUREAU SAYS**

▲ P4

**SAM MEETS ASSOCIATIONS; UNIVERSAL MEDICAL INSURANCE, ‘TALENTS PLAN’ ON THE AGENDA**

▲ P4

**CHINA AND NORTH KOREA MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR TIES**

▲ P6



AP PHOTO



**South Korean** President Yoon Suk Yeol yesterday said North Korea's recent nuclear facility disclosure aims to attract U.S. attention ahead of elections. Yoon expects further provocations like nuclear tests and missile launches, and stresses the importance of North Korea's denuclearization at upcoming ASEAN summits.

**Indian** forces killed 31 suspected Maoist rebels in a nine-hour battle in Chhattisgarh's Abhujmaad forest. Acting on intelligence, the counterinsurgency troops cornered nearly 50 rebels. Authorities report no casualties among Indian troops. This is the deadliest clash in Chhattisgarh this year.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** Russia attacked Ukraine overnight with 87 Shahed drones and four types of missiles. Ukrainian air defenses destroyed 56 drones and two missiles across 14 regions. The barrage yesterday damaged infrastructure, killed one person in Kharkiv, and set a warehouse ablaze in Odesa.

AP PHOTO



**Vatican** Pope Francis yesterday named 21 new cardinals, significantly expanding the College of Cardinals. The youngest, aged 44, heads the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Melbourne. The cardinals will officially receive their red hats in December, further shaping the group that will elect Francis' successor.

# MASSIVE CROWDS WITH A TWIST

More visitors came to the city during the National Day Golden Week; travelers from abroad increased in number, although their share of the pie has shrunk

▲ P2-3



**MACAU AIRPORT EXPANSION TO BEGIN BY YEAR'S END**

▲ P3



**HISTORIAN PHILIP STERN CORPORATIONS AT THE HEART OF BRITISH COLONIALISM**

▲ P5

# MORE VISITORS OVER THE HOLIDAYS BUT THE SHARE OF FOREIGNERS SHRINKING

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE number of visitors to Macau during the “Golden Week” of the National Day holidays has increased this year compared to 2023, official daily statistics released by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) show.

According to the figures, in the first seven days of the eight-day festive season, the total number of visitors to Macau presented an increase of 14.35% year-on-year compared to 2023.

Until Oct. 5 (Saturday) the total number of entries recorded was 982,581, that is, around 123,000 more than in the previous year.

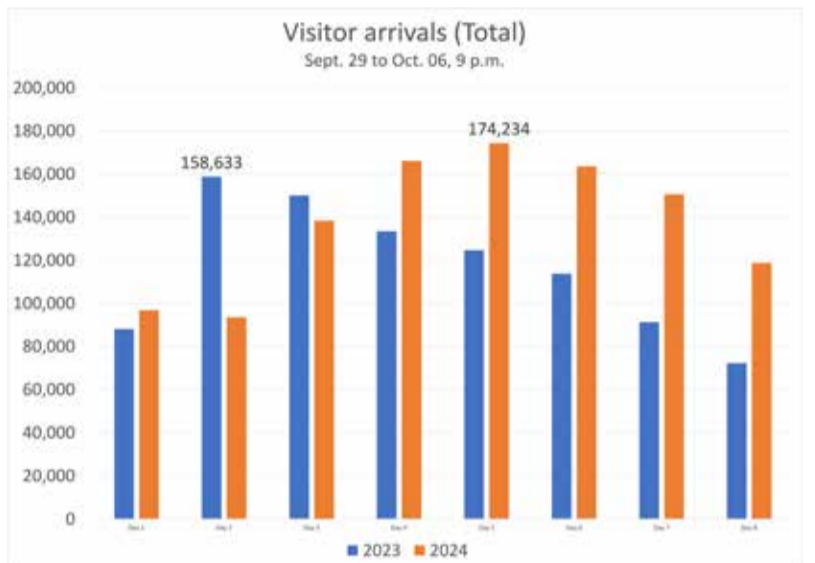
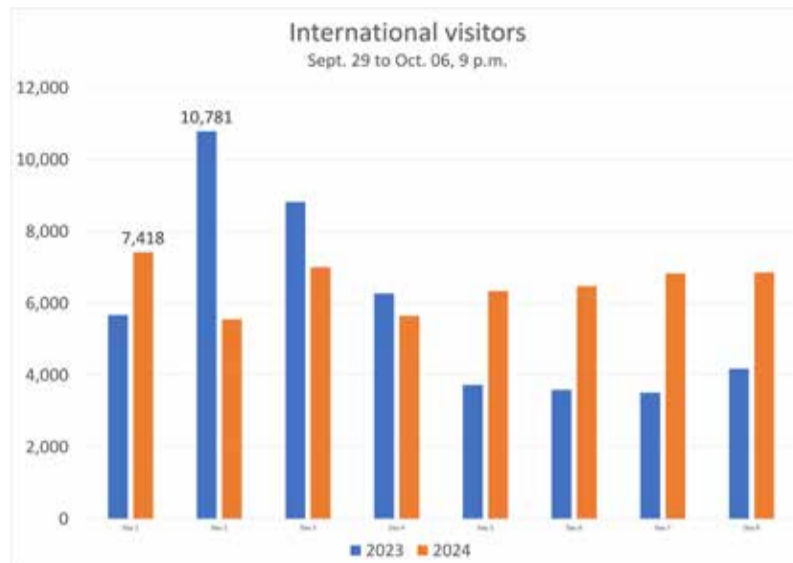
Also notable was a slight change in the pattern of visitor arrivals which in 2023 saw the peak on the second day (Sept. 30) with a total of 158,633 entries, following six days in which the entry figures were successively and progressively lower.

This year, the peak of visitor entries was registered only on the fifth day (Oct. 3) when 174,234 visitors were recorded entering Macau borders.

This happened after an initial drop in the figures from the first to the second day (96,717 to 93,456), followed by a progressive rise until the peak and also a smoother decrease in the following days.

Despite the significant increase in the total figures and the new single-day high, not all figures show a positive trend as the share of foreign visitors, one of the important bids of Macau in what concerns tourism development, shows a decrease in the first seven days by around 0.3%. This happened not due to a decrease in the total number of foreign visitors entering Macau over this period but because this group registered a slower growth when compared to the visitors arriving from Greater China.

Still, the goal of receiving a daily average of over 130,000 set previously by Cheng Wai Tong, deputy director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), seems well on target with this figure standing



at 140,369 over the first seven days.

According to Cheng, the final results should reach an unprecedented level. The same MGTO official noted that in the first few days of the holidays, the local hotel occupancy rate was around 95%, a rate that is expected to be even higher in the peak days.

In August this year, Macau established a new monthly record welcoming over 3.65 million visitors.

The authorities have set a target of at least 33 million visitors by the end of 2024 with at least 2 million international arrivals. For 2025, the bar for international visitors is said to be raised to at least 3 million.

## OVER 1.1 MILLION ENTRIES IN EIGHT DAYS

The most up-to-date figures related to the entries recorded in Macau over the Golden Week by PSP have shown that over the last eight days (Sept. 30 to Oct. 6, 9 p.m.), Macau received over 1.1 million visitors, accounting for a daily average of over 137,647. Although these results are not yet final, they draw a picture very close to the final figures that will only be known today. Taking into account the figures released and updated until 9 p.m. on Sunday, this year's visitation throughout the National Day holidays should represent an increase of over 18% when compared year-on-year with 2023 and also set a new record high for this period of the year.

## GOV'T SAYS PEDESTRIANIZATION OF TAIPA OLD VILLAGE A SUCCESS, CLAIMS TO BE COLLECTING OPINION TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE authorities have said that the pedestrianization of the Taipa Old Village area over the Golden Week was a success, a multi-departmental government team, established to handle this project said in a press statement.

According to the authorities, “Since its inauguration on Oct. 1 and until now, with the close cooperation between interdepartmental departments and local associations, the temporary pedestrian zone set up in Taipa Old Village during the National Day Holidays has been operating smoothly and the movement of vehicles and people in that area has been kept in good order.”

The zone that has been in operation since noon on Oct. 1 until 7 p.m. today was said to be collecting a lot of interest from both residents and tourists and this has been supported by shopkeepers.

Tried for the first time



during the Chinese New Year period this year, the setting up of a temporary pedestrian zone in the old Taipa district “has received widespread public recognition,” the same governmental entities claim, noting that it aims to optimize the flow of people and traffic management in the area, as well as to balance the needs

of residents, traders, and tourists, and ensure the safe and orderly movement of pedestrians and vehicles in the area.

The interdepartmental working group is also said to have been collecting opinions from different sides, aiming to carry out an in-depth evaluation and analysis, to further improve the organization of

the traffic flow.

Starting with the Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, the government has been trying to establish several temporary pedestrian zones in places like Taipa Old Village or Rua da Felicidade which have been collecting mixed feelings and opinions from the population.

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# Tourism in Golden Week boom puts public transit system to the test

VICTORIA CHAN

**T**HE record number of visitors to Macau last week for National Day celebrations highlighted ongoing issues with the territory's public transportation system. Bus operators recorded over 800,000 passenger trips on Oct. 3, a single-day high that led to frustration among locals dealing with long wait times.

Students reported missing buses due to full vehicles, while elderly passengers noted increasingly crowded conditions over the long weekend.

In response, the head of Macau's Transport Consultative Committee called for action to better plan for large visitor numbers. Ip Wai Keong suggested studying carrying capacity data to coordinate bus routes more efficiently. He also urged the acceleration of the construction of the planned light rail system to boost options during peak times.



A review of the overall bus network was advocated as tourism and housing developments test the transportation limits.

However, implementing solutions to keep locals happily commuting amidst booming tourism will take time. For now, residents remain left frustrated navigating daily commutes among record holiday crowds.

Growing dissatisfaction is also emerging regarding Macau's campaign to pedestrianize Rua da Felicidade. Several family-run businesses have seen declining foot traffic since closures to vehicles began.

While walk-in customers were initially brisk, others like herbal tea seller Miss Chan say foot traffic has sharply declined. She explains that this

street relies on cars to bring people in, as parking and attractions are insufficient long-term without vehicles. Demands for a promised review of the project's impacts are posted everywhere.

President of the Industry and Commerce Federation of Macau Central and Southern District, Lei Cheok Kuan says the project "failed" due to poor communication of goals. Responding to the situation, Deland Leong, president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), says a traffic rethink is coming after this week's holidays to "optimize" a scheme meant to aid, not hinder, local businesses and residents.

An investigation by The Times found significant shortcomings of Macau's Light Rapid Transit (LRT) network. The LRT is effective for shorter trips within Taipa but struggles with connections to the Peninsula, where public bus routes are lengthy. Shuttle buses alleviate pressure on public transport and offer convenient, door-to-door service. Additionally, shuttle buses provide amenities like free Wi-Fi and mobile phone charging docks, which the LRT lacks.

Overall, while the LRT is quick for certain routes, shuttle buses provided by the gaming operators may be more practical for most travelers.

## TEACHERS GIVEN NEW STUDENT ASSESSMENT TOOL TARGETING MENTAL HEALTH

Macau teachers have been provided a new assessment tool to help identify students who may be facing psychological or other issues, according to the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ). The head of DSEDJ Department of Non-Tertiary Education said at a meeting of the Youth Affairs Committee that teachers were given an identification form so they could spot issues early. The materials given to schools cover eight themes about emotion, relationships, and life to help students understand their well-being. DSEDJ will continue developing materials like infographics and picture books to support students of different ages. The bureau wants to encourage students to support each other as well.

## 101 VETERINARIANS ACCREDITED UNDER NEW LAW

The Council of Veterinary Medicine Professionals has accredited 101 veterinarians in Macau under the new "Law on Veterinary Clinical Care and Commercial Activity of Animals" that took effect Apr. 1. Those accredited have obtained the required education and are qualified to practice in Macau or elsewhere. They must still register with the Municipal Affairs Bureau to practice for two years at a time. The council reviews candidates' academic and professional credentials to ensure they meet the law's standards before issuing certificates. Veterinarians must follow professional ethics codes and may face discipline for violations. The council works with authorities to help the field understand responsibilities under the new regulations.

## MACAU TRADE FAIR TO BOOST BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The 29th Macau International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF) and the 2024 Macau Franchise Exhibition (MFE) will take place from Oct. 16 to 19 at the Venetian Macao. To celebrate significant anniversaries in the SAR, these events will feature eight thematic matching sessions aimed at enhancing business cooperation. The "1+4" development strategy will guide discussions in key industries such as modern finance and health. A special procurement session will facilitate negotiations between small and medium-sized enterprises and larger corporations, fostering growth and international connections.

## PASSENGER TRAFFIC SOARS AS RECOVERY GAINS MOMENTUM

**M**ACAU welcomed on Oct. 3 a record breaks 174,234 visitors with almost 345,000 visitor entries and exits recorded on the same day, data from the Public Security Police Force informed.

The Border Gate (Portas do Cerco) was the busiest port, facilitating 79,546 arrivals. Other significant entry points included the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and Hengqin Port, which welcomed 26,779 and 30,701 passengers, respectively.

Andy Wu, president of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, attributes this surge in tourism to several Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) initiatives launched earlier this year, and

roadshows held abroad.

Wu believes that the expansion of the number of Chinese cities eligible for the Individual Visa Scheme, as well as the introduction of the Hengqin-Macau multiple-entry visa, and the increasing the duty-free limit for visitors have also contributed to these results.

"The tourism numbers are ideal," Wu stated. He expressed confidence that local government efforts to enhance tourism advertising in mainland China will further boost visitor numbers. He also noted that the influx of mainland tourists is expected to positively impact local businesses. NS



## Macau airport expansion to begin by year's end

**W**ORK on the expansion of Macau International Airport is slated to commence before the end of 2024, with a completion target of 2030. The project aims to reclaim 1.3 square kilometers of land off the existing runway to accommodate additional gates and taxiways, significantly enhancing the airport's capacity.

According to the Macau International Airport Co Ltd. (CAM), this expansion will increase the airport's annual passenger handling capacity to 15 million, representing a substantial boost from current levels.

The initiative comes as Macau's aviation sector experiences a robust recovery post-pandemic, with commercial flights increasing by 28.5% in August compared to last year.

Recent statistics reveal that the airport managed 5,218 flights in August alone, while air cargo volume surged by 78%, reaching 9,542 tons. Over the first eight months of 2024, flight operations rose by more than 63%, and air cargo volume nearly doubled while the volume of air cargo rose by nearly 98% to 67,328, indicating a robust recovery in travel and trade. NS

CE ELECTION

# SAM HOU FAI MEETS ASSOCIATIONS; UNIVERSAL MEDICAL INSURANCE, 'TALENTS PLAN' ON AGENDA

RENATO MARQUES

**C**AMPAIGNING for the post of new Chief Executive (CE) of Macau, Sam Hou Fai has met in the last few days with several civic society associations.

In a meeting with the Aliança do Povo de Instituição, an association that includes lawmakers Si Ka Lon, Song Pek Kei, and Lei Leong Wong, among others, Sam heard the proposal that the new government should consider launching a project for a universal health insurance system in Macau.

The same association also called on the solo candidate for CE to improve the retirement guarantee system and the pension mechanism for the elderly, reviewing public housing policies and deepening the coordination work between Hengqin and Macau in the areas of labor and law, among other things, a statement released on the candidate's official website noted.

Sam noted that the association, linked with residents originally from Fujian province, has always played an important role and contributed to Macau, particularly as a "think tank."

In a different meeting of the same kind, Sam's campaign



group has also met with representatives from the Macau Economic and Livelihood Alliance and also includes some people who hold currently directly elected seats at the Legislative Assembly, namely Lo Choi In.

The group expressed the desire that the next government could pay more attention to the Talent Acquisition Plan

and provide better training and opportunities to the younger generations of Macau to be able to engage in the "1+4" industrial model.

The same association also wants Sam to improve the financing model of the Macau Foundation for social associations as well as oversee the billing model of e-commerce platforms, among other topics.



CRIME

## Police Officer suspended after sexual harassment conviction

**A** police officer found guilty of sexually harassing a female nurse has been suspended from duty, according to an announcement by the Office of the Secretary for Security.

The incident occurred on May 18, 2022, when the off-duty officer visited Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre due to a head injury. While awaiting treatment, he allegedly sexually harassed a nurse, prompting her to call the police.

The case was investigated by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) last year in June, and the police officer was later charged and convicted of sexual harassment by the crimi-

nal court of the Court of First Instance. He was sentenced to four months in prison with two years of probation.

The defendant appealed the decision, but the Court of Second Instance dismissed the appeal and affirmed the judgment on June 11 this year. Based on the instruction by the Secretary for Security on Sept. 24, the police officer has now been suspended from his duties.

The Office of the Secretary for Security stressed that PSP "would never tolerate any violation of law by any police officers," and that anyone who violates the law will have to face the consequences. VC

GAMING

## WYNN RESORTS SECURES FIRST GAMING LICENSE IN UAE

**W**YNN Resorts Ltd. has made history by being awarded the first commercial gaming operator's license in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as announced on Friday. The Las Vegas-based company is developing a luxury resort on Wynn Al Marjan Island in Ras Al Khaimah, marking a significant milestone for the region's burgeoning gaming industry.

The project, a joint venture with Marjan and RAK Hospitality Holding, is currently under construction and is expected to open in early 2027. The resort will feature 1,542 rooms, 22 dining venues, and a theater for live performances, all set against the stunning backdrop of

the Arabian Gulf. Wynn has already invested over USD514 million into the USD3.9 billion development.

This regulatory shift comes as the UAE seeks to enhance its tourism appeal amid growing competition from neighboring Saudi Arabia. Last month, the UAE established a federal entity to oversee gambling operations, signaling a new era for entertainment in the conservative Gulf region.

As Wynn prepares to present its ambitious plans to investors on Oct. 8 (tomorrow), industry insiders are closely watching how this venture will reshape the landscape of luxury hospitality and gaming in the Middle East. NS

HEALTH

## MACAU UNION HOSPITAL STAFF TO REACH 400 BY YEAR'S END

**T**HE staff at the recently inaugurated Macau Union Hospital is expected to grow to 400 employees by the end of the year, according to Health Bureau (SSM) acting director Cheang Seng Ip.

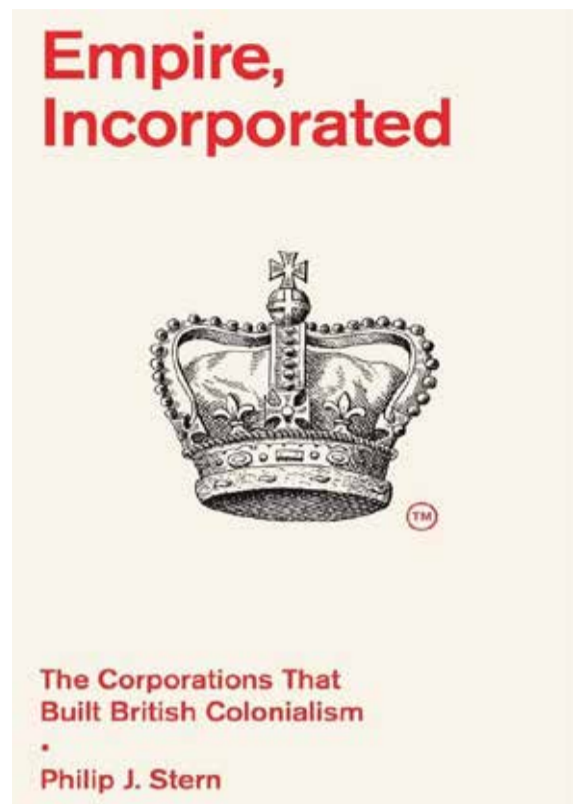
In a response to an inquiry from lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, the acting director of the SSM revealed that the Peking Union Medical College Hospital has sent over 50 senior medical experts to Macau to assist in the initiation of medical services at the new Macau Union Hospital.

The hospital has already recruited more than 80 local medical staff and about 20 non-clinical medical support staff. The goal is to reach a total staff of 400 by the end of 2024.



To further enhance the capabilities of its personnel, the hospital plans to send doctors, nurses, and clinical technicians to

Beijing and other locations next year for various training courses. This initiative aims to update the medical knowledge of the hospital's staff and ensure they are equipped to provide the best possible care to patients. TC



HISTORY

# Corporations at the heart of colonialism: a new perspective

NADIA SHAW

**I**N a presentation that took place at Livraria Portuguesa (the Portuguese bookshop) on Saturday evening, historian Philip Stern covered his latest work, *Empire, Incorporated: The Corporations That Built British Colonialism*. His discussion touched on traditional views of British colonialism, emphasizing the crucial role corporations played in global expansion and governance.

Stern argued that “corporations were fundamental to British colonial endeavors” from the 16th century onward. He asserts that these entities were

not merely tools of the state; rather, they financed, promoted, and governed overseas ventures, intertwining public and private power in ways that resonate with contemporary concerns about corporate influence. Unlike traditional narratives that portray corporations as subordinate to sovereign states, Stern contends they were often the primary actors in colonial expansion.

The presentation traced the evolution of corporations from guilds to joint-stock companies, spotlighting early examples such as mining companies in England. By the late 15th century, merchants began funding exploratory

missions led by figures like Venetian explorer John Cabot. These initial efforts set the stage for later colonial enterprises.

Despite numerous failures and significant debt, Stern noted that “failure did not deter future attempts.” Instead, it frequently inspired renewed efforts to rectify past mistakes. Investors defined profit in various ways—ranging from financial gain to religious conversion—creating a complex landscape of motivations behind these corporate endeavors.

A significant portion of Stern’s analysis focused on the East India Company (EIC),

founded in 1600. While acknowledging its unique power among English colonial corporations, he placed it within a broader context of similar entities. Stern argued that while the EIC was exceptional in its territorial ambitions, it was part of a larger trend of corporate involvement in colonialism.

In the eighteenth century, Macau emerged as a crucial hub for the EIC as it sought to expand trade with China. The EIC’s initial voyages to Macau marked the beginning of a complex relationship between British traders and the Portuguese enclave, which had long served as the primary ga-

teway for Western commerce into China. By the late 1690s, the EIC established a more permanent presence with the successful arrival of the vessel *\*Macclesfield\**, signifying a turning point in English-Chinese trade relations.

This shift not only facilitated direct trading opportunities but also intensified competition with Portuguese interests eager to maintain their monopoly. As British influence grew, Macau became a vital communication and logistical center for EIC operations, ultimately reshaping trade dynamics in the region and laying groundwork for future colonial endeavors in Asia.

Stern also highlighted how corporations operated with substantial amounts of debt while minimizing individual risk for investors. This structure enabled them to undertake ambitious projects without facing immediate financial burdens. He likened corporations to “a river of tents,” constantly changing yet maintaining continuity over time.

In conclusion, Stern asserted that “the legacies of corporate colonialism persist today,” raising critical questions about corporate power and its relationship with state authority. He urged audiences to reconsider historical narratives that separate public and private spheres, suggesting that understanding this interplay is essential for comprehending contemporary global dynamics.

The presentation offered a compelling exploration of how corporations shaped not only British colonialism but also modern concepts of governance and power. As Stern’s work continues to gain attention, it invites readers to reflect on the enduring impact of corporate influence in today’s world.

## CORPORATE BITS

### Galaxy Macau presents ‘Galaxy Opera Gala’ featuring Plácido Domingo



Twelve-time Grammy Award winner Plácido Domingo returns to Macau for the first time in nine years, alongside a world-class lineup of exceptional musical talent.

The event will take place at the Galaxy International Con-

vention Center on October 20.

The ‘Galaxy Opera Gala’ will see the 83-year-old maestro teaming up with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra. Joining them is the trailblazing Italian conductor Beatrice Venezia, Principal Con-

ductor of the Orchestra Milano Classica and the Orchestra Scarlatti Young in Naples.

Completing the lineup are two rising stars in the opera world: China-born, Italy-based soprano Bingbing Wang, who holds a Master’s Degree from the prestigious Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Music in Milan; and Italian-German mezzo-soprano Anna-Doris Capitelli, who joined the illustrious Accademia Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 2017.

The program will feature arias and duets from famous operas such as *La Traviata*, *The Merry Widow*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Carmen*, and more. Guests can look forward to a musical celebration that bridges cultures while emphasizing Macau’s status as a “City of Performing Arts.”

### ‘SJM Mimi Choo Music Show’: A night of classic tunes



Hosted at the Grand Ballroom of Grand Lisboa Macau on September 29, the ‘SJM Mimi Choo Music Show’ was “a resounding success,” with reports of reaching maximum capacity and a lively atmosphere, according to SJM Resorts.

Fans saw the return of Mimi

Choo, a Malaysian-born Hong Kong actress and singer, who is widely recognized in Hong Kong and surrounding Southeast Asia for her work in Hong Kong and Singaporean productions.

Choo performed a list of hit songs, including signature tracks “Leaping in the

Spotlight” and “It’s Fate That We Met,” presenting the audience with a sense of nostalgia through these classic tunes.

Choo was also reported to perform with “infectious energy” and engaged in “playful banter” with her fans, creating a memorable experience for those in attendance.

The music show featured Anne Heung as a special guest as well.

The Hong Kong actress, previously crowned Miss Hong Kong in 1998, performed her own songs, including “I Need You Every Minute” and “Dream to Awakening,” receiving a positive response from the audience.

DIPLOMACY

# China and N.Korea mark their 75th anniversary of ties as outsiders question their relationship

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**T**HE leaders of North Korea and China marked the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations yesterday by exchanging messages that expressed hopes for stronger ties, as outsiders raised questions about their relationship.

The message exchange came as North Korea and Russia have been sharply expanding their cooperation while China apparently keeps its distance. Experts say that the level of exchanges and commemorative programs between North Korea and China in the coming months will provide a clue to the exact status of their ties.

In a message sent to Chinese



President Xi Jinping, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his government will "steadily strive to consolidate and develop the friendly and cooperative relations" between the two countries, according to Nor-

th Korea's official Korean Central News Agency.

Xi, in his message to Kim, said that China is ready to jointly promote "the stable and further advance of the socialist cause in the

two countries," KCNA said.

Since North Korea and China established diplomatic ties on Oct. 6, 1949, their relationship has often been described as being "as close as lips and teeth." China, North Korea's biggest trading partner and main aid provider, has been suspected of avoiding fully implementing U.N. sanctions on North Korea and sending clandestine aid shipments to help its impoverished neighbor stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against U.S. influence on the Korean Peninsula.

But many observers say China is reluctant to form a three-way, anti-West alliance with North Korea and Russia as it prefers a stable regional security environment to tackle numerous economic

challenges and maintain relationships with Europe and its Asian neighbors.

North Korea and Russia have moved significantly closer to each other amid widespread outside suspicions that North Korea has supplied conventional weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine in return for military and economic assistance. During a meeting in Pyongyang in June, Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a pact stipulating mutual military assistance if either country is attacked, in what was considered the two countries' biggest defense deal since the end of the Cold War.

North Korea is locked in confrontations with the U.S., South Korea and their partners over its advancing nuclear program. Kim has said he was forced to expand both nuclear and conventional capabilities to cope with U.S.-led security threats.

Yesterday, KCNA reported that Kim oversaw a live artillery firing drill by cadets of a military academy. After watching the drill, Kim said training programs at the military academy must focus on "the guerrilla war tactics to wipe out the enemies through rapid mobile and surprise operations," according to KCNA. **MDT/AP**

XINHUA FOCUS

# China's notable achievements in environmental protection over past 75 years

EDITORS, XINHUA

**C**HINA has made remarkable strides in ecological and environmental protection over the past 75 years, increasing the green coverage ratio, improving the system for natural protection areas, better-protecting wildlife species and their habitats, and enhancing air pollution control.

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the green coverage ratio of Youyu County, located at the edge of the Maowusu Desert, was less than 0.3 percent.

Local government and residents' continuous afforestation efforts over the past seven decades have increased the county's green coverage ratio to 57 percent. The once "barren land" has become an "oasis in the desert."

Youyu County's story epitomizes China's national efforts to make the country greener.

China's forest coverage rate has increased to over

24 percent from only 8.6 percent around 70 years ago. According to data from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the country has contributed about a quarter of the world's total new green area since the beginning of this century.

In 1978, China implemented the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, which has effectively curbed the expansion of desertification and become a "green great wall" to prevent sandstorms, conserve water and soil, and safeguard agriculture in northwest, north and northeast China.

By 2020, the program saw afforestation of 480 million mu (32 million hectares) of land, the management of 1.28 billion mu of degraded grasslands, and the forest coverage rate increased from around 5 percent in 1978 to about 14 percent in these regions.

**PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY**

After Dinghushan became China's first nature re-



serve to preserve primary forest and protect biodiversity in 1956, China gradually established nearly 10,000 natural protection areas at all levels, including nature reserves, forest parks, natural heritage sites and geoparks.

The country attaches great importance to biodiversity conservation, as evidenced by being among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In 2021, China established its first national parks, covering a protected land area of 230,000 square km.

These parks, including Sanjiangyuan National Park, the Giant Panda National Park and Wuyishan National Park, are home to nearly 30 percent of the country's key terrestrial wildlife species.

The progress in these national parks has made protecting biodiversity evident when considering the numbers involved.

The population of the Hainan gibbons, a rare primate that lives in the Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park, had risen to 37 in 2022 from 13 in 2003. Sanjiangyuan National Park, meanwhile, is now

home to more than 70,000 Tibetan antelopes, in sharp contrast to less than 20,000 in the 1990s.

Official data shows that 90 percent of China's terrestrial ecosystem types and 74 percent of key protected wild animal and plant species populations are now effectively safeguarded.

**ENHANCED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Environmental protection has been a high priority for China since the State Council convened the first national conference on the issue in 1973.

Following the introduction of an action plan to prevent and control air pollution in 2013, China became the first developing country in the world to impose large-scale efforts to reduce PM2.5 density.

The country has seen fast improvement in air quality, with 203 cities, or around 60 percent of the total cities, meeting the air quality standard in 2023, according to the Ministry

of Ecology and Environment.

China has also made substantial strides in protecting the water ecology of key river basins, with national water quality continuing to improve.

According to the ministry, the proportion of surface water bodies nationwide classified as having excellent water quality reached 89.4 percent in 2023.

This figure surpasses the target set in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) by 4.4 percentage points.

Using the Yangtze River as an example, 98.5 percent of monitoring sites in the basin achieved excellent water quality in 2023, up 0.4 percentage points year on year.

Additionally, the number of indigenous fish species recorded in the Yangtze River Basin increased to 227, up by 34 species from 2022. The number of nationally protected aquatic wildlife species rose to 14 in 2023, an increase of three compared to the previous year.

Official data showed the country's total investment in environmental pollution control reached 901.4 billion yuan (about 128.64 billion U.S. dollars) in 2022, compared with only 2.5 billion to 3 billion yuan per year in the early 1980s. **XINHUA**



These combined images made from eight photographs show members of Suni and the Seven Princesses at a senior community center in Chilgok

SOUTH KOREA

# In their 80s, these women learned reading and rap

LEE JIN-MAN, CHILGOK

**WEARING** an oversized bucket hat, silver chains and a black Miu Miu shirt, 82-year-old Park Jeom-sun gesticulates, her voice rising and falling with staccato lines about growing chili peppers, cucumbers and eggplants.

Park, nicknamed Suni, was flanked by seven long-time friends who repeated her moves and her lines. Together, they're Suni and the Seven Princesses, South Korea's latest octogenarian sensation. With an average age of 85, they're probably the oldest rap group in the country.

Born at a time when women were often marginalized in education, Park and her friends were among a group of older adults learning how to read and write the Korean alphabet, hangeul, at a community center in their farming village in South Korea's rural southeast.

They were having so much fun that they started dabbling with poetry. They began writing and performing rap in summer last year.

Suni and the Seven Princesses enjoy nationwide fame, appearing in commercials and going viral on social media. South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo sent them a congratulatory message last month on their first anniversary, praising their passion for learning.

At a road near their community center in Chilgok

on Thursday, Park and her friends were rehearsing for a performance Friday evening in the capital, Seoul, where they were invited to open an event celebrating hangeul heritage.

"Picking chili peppers at the pepper field, picking cucumbers at the cucumber field, picking eggplants at the eggplant field, picking zucchini at the zucchini field!" the group rapped along with Park. "We're back home now and it feels so good!"

Park said the group usually practices two or three times a week, more if they're preparing for a show.

On Friday, hundreds of people applauded and cheered, and then the group lined up for a photo with South Korean Culture Minister Yu In Chon.

Park talked about the joy of learning to read, saying she can now "go to the bank, ride the bus and go anywhere" she wants without someone helping her.

"During and after the Korean War, I couldn't study because of the social atmosphere, but I started learning hangeul in 2016," Park said.

Kang Hye-eun, Park's 29-year-old granddaughter and a local healthcare worker who helps older adults, said she was proud to see her grandmother on television and in viral videos.

"It's amazing that she got to know hangeul like this and has started to rap," she said.

MDT/AP

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## MGM Holds a Design Contest to Inject Innovation and Creativity into Barra District



In a push to further bolster public participation in the revitalization of Barra District, MGM has earlier collaborated with the Macao Illustrators Association to launch the "Barra District Logo and Visual Identity Design Contest" (Contest) – and the results were officially announced. This initiative, comprising "Student Group" and "Open Group", received a total of 78 design entries. The winning designs – including Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards along with several Finalists from each category – not only are publicly exhibited at the Former Barra Slaughterhouse Site Corridor, but also have the opportunity to be adopted into the district's development. The Contest was started off with guided "Introduction Tours", curated to offer contestants in-depth knowledge of the district's history, and for them to transform its cultural elements into unique creative works. The whole objective is to turn the public's innovation and creativity into a fresh impetus that helps enhance the district's visual identity and foster its long-term development.



Mai Wan Jun and Li Ke Xin, Gold Award Winners of the Student Group, said, "We are delighted to have participated in this competition. Through the guided tours arranged by MGM, as well as extensive research and data collection, we went from being unfamiliar to developing a deep connection with such a significant historical and cultural site in Macau. We believe this contest is valuable and has had a positive impact in promoting Barra District."



This event also marks an important step in raising public awareness and engagement with Barra District. By inviting submissions from across Macau, MGM aims to transform the perspectives of local creative talents into some captivating visual designs for the district's heritage buildings. These works not only showcase Macau's ingenuity, but also embody the public's respect for the district's history and their aspirations for its future.

Since July, MGM has launched the "Summer Hype" Series Event at Barra District – in which MGM has strengthened collaborations with SMEs and creative partners across Macau to jointly launch four mega-events. These include leisure photo spots, visual identity design contest, cross-industry retail collaborations, and an illustration exhibition – all designed to transform the Barra District into Macau's new landmark for trendy lifestyle.



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AP PHOTO



People march on the street as Pro-Palestinian supporters rally in Sydney, yesterday

OCT. 7 ANNIVERSARY

# Pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli crowds rally across the world

SYLVIE CORBET &  
GIADA ZAMPANO, PARIS

**C**ROWDS were participating in pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli protests and memorial events across Europe, North Africa and Asia on Sunday on the eve of the first anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel.

Yesterday's events follow massive rallies that took place Saturday in several European cities, including London, Berlin, Paris and Rome. Other events are scheduled through the week, with an expected peak on Monday, the date of the anniversary.

At a march in Berlin, near the Brandenburg Gate, hundreds of pro-Israeli demonstrators set off up the famed Unter den Linden behind a banner that read "Against all antisemitism," accompanied by a police escort.

With many Israeli flags waving overhead, some Jewish leaders led a song about "shalom" — peace — while marchers chanted "Free Gaza from Hamas!" and "Bring them home," referring to hostages still held in the Gaza Strip.

Thousands gathered in Paris for a Jewish memorial event featuring speakers and artists paying tribute to those killed in the Oct. 7 attack and stand with those still in captivity.

Ayelet Samerano, mother of Jonathan Samerano, who died after he was shot and kidnapped on Oct. 7 at the Supernova festival, said "we are a united people. Together we are strong ... no

enemy will bring us down. With this unity and strength, we will bring our loved ones home."

In London, thousands gathered in Hyde Park in a similar memorial event. The crowds chanted "Bring them home" and waved Israeli flags and placards with the faces of hostages still held by Hamas.

## MASSIVE PROTESTS

Meanwhile, people took to the streets from Pakistan to Morocco in massive pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

In Morocco's capital, Rabat, thousands marched by the parliament and called on the government to revoke its 2020 agreement formalizing the country's ties with Israel.

Abdelilah Miftah, from Casablanca, said Palestinians and Lebanese were now facing "Israeli arrogance."

"Israel is not respecting any laws and is waging an aggressive war against them," Miftah said.

The protest in Rabat was among the largest in months. Morocco's government has spoken out against the war in Gaza but retained its ties with Israel.

In the southern Pakistani city of Karachi, a massive pro-Palestinian rally was organized by the country's largest religious political party, Jamaat-e-Islami. Its chief, Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman, said the protest "is to wake up the world. ... This protest is to tell the U.S. that it is supporting terrorists."

Earlier on Sunday in Australia,

thousands of people rallied in support of Palestinians and Lebanon. A pro-Israeli rally also took place in Melbourne.

Samantha Gazal said she came to the rally in Sydney "because I can't believe our government is giving impunity to a violent extremist nation and has done nothing. ... We're watching the violence play out on livestream, and they're doing nothing."

In Melbourne, supporters of Israel held up posters showing Israeli hostages who are still missing.

"We feel like we didn't do anything to deserve this," said Jeremy Weinstein, one of the participants. "We're just supporting our brothers and sisters who are fighting a war that they didn't invite."

## HEIGHTENED SECURITY ALERTS

Security forces in several countries warned of heightened levels of alert in major cities, amid concerns that the escalating conflict in the Middle East could inspire new terror attacks in Europe or that some of the protests could turn violent.

France's interior minister was to hold a special security meeting on Sunday evening to assess the "terror threat," his office said.

Yesterday, Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni expressed her "full solidarity" with police, the day after after security forces used tear gas and water cannons to disperse violent de-

monstrators in Rome.

Meloni firmly condemned clashes between a few pro-Palestinian demonstrators and law enforcement officers, saying it was "intolerable that dozens of officers are injured during a demonstration."

Thirty police officers and four protesters were hurt in clashes at the pro-Palestinian march in Rome Saturday, local media said.

On Oct. 7 last year, Hamas launched a surprise attack into Israel, killing 1,200 Israelis, taking 250 people hostage and setting off a war with Israel that has shattered much of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.

More than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed since then in Gaza, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between fighters and civilians. It says more than half were women and children.

Nearly 100 Israeli hostages remain in Gaza, with fewer than 70 believed to be alive. Israelis have experienced attacks — missiles from Iran and Hezbollah, explosive drones from Yemen, fatal shootings and stabbings — as the region braces for further escalation.

In late September, Israel shifted some of its focus to Hezbollah, which holds much of the power in parts of southern Lebanon and some other areas of the country, attacking the militants with exploding pagers, airstrikes and, eventually, incursions into Lebanon. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1985 GUNMEN HIJACK ITALIAN CRUISE LINER



Palestinian militants have hijacked an Italian cruise liner, the Achille Lauro, in the Mediterranean and threatened to blow it up.

The gunmen are demanding the release of 50 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

There are said to be 420 passengers and crew on board the ship including six Britons.

Little is yet known about the hijackers but Egyptian and Italian authorities are said to be in communication with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

The Naples-based ship was commandeered this afternoon shortly after leaving the port of Alexandria in Egypt on its way to Port Said.

Most of the passengers disembarked in Alexandria to go on a sight-seeing tour and were planning to rejoin the cruise further up the Egyptian coast.

The Achille Lauro's present position and intended destination is unknown, but the Italian Navy is sending ships and reconnaissance aircraft in an attempt to establish its location.

Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi is understood to be holding an emergency meeting to discuss options with his foreign and defence ministers.

Marine hijackings are uncommon. In 1961 the passenger liner Santa Maria was taken over by opponents of the Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar, but it ended peacefully.

Notable sea hijacks have also occurred off Singapore, Greece and Cambodia in the 1970s.

Experts say a forced boarding of the Achille Lauro could result in heavy hostage casualties.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The hijackers were from the Palestinian Liberation Front, a splinter group of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

They shot dead a disabled American tourist, 69-year-old Leon Klinghoffer and had his body thrown overboard with his wheelchair.

The crisis ended on 10 October. Egypt gave free passage to the hijackers in exchange for the rest of the hostages.

But US Navy jets intercepted a chartered Egypt Air 737 carrying the gunmen and forced it to land in Italy.

Four of them were tried in Italy and sentenced to long prison terms. Abu Abbas, the alleged mastermind escaped jail and stands convicted in absentia.

He was arrested by US special forces in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, in April 2003 and died in custody in March 2004. A post mortem examination showed he died of heart disease.

The Achille Lauro caught fire and sank in 1994.





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Coco Gauff of the United States reacts during her women's singles final match against Karolina Muchova of Czech Republic at the China Open tennis tournament at the National Tennis Center in Beijing

GOLF

# Coco Gauff wins China Open final in straight sets

**C**OCO Gauff won her second title this season with a lopsided 6-1, 6-3 victory over Karolina Muchova in the final of the China Open yesterday. Aged 20, the sixth-ranked

U.S. player became the youngest China Open champion in 14 years. She is also the second American champion in Beijing, following Serena Williams' title runs in 2004 and 2013. "Honestly, it means a lot

when I saw that the last American woman to win this was Serena Williams," Gauff said. "Anytime my name is mentioned in whatever sentence hers is, it's a huge honor." It was Gauff's eighth career

title. She improved her record in tour finals to 8-1 and has now a 7-0 record in hard-court finals, a feat never achieved before in the Open Era.

"That's pretty cool," Gauff said. "I hope somebody else breaks it. I think records are meant to be broken, honestly."

Gauff, who defended her Auckland title earlier this season, wasted no time and took the opening set in just 31 minutes. She dropped just five points on her first serve, hit 24 winners and broke Muchova five times.

Gauff's win in Beijing improved her chances of qualifying for the WTA Finals featuring the eight top players for the third consecutive year. With her title, she will overtake Jessica Pegula to take the No. 5 spot ahead of the final WTA 1000 tournament of the season, the Wuhan Open starting today.

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner overcame a one set deficit to rally to a 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-2 win against Tomas Martin Etcheverry at the Shanghai Masters.

A night after winning his 250th career match with a straight-sets victory, the 23-year-old Italian faced a much sterner third-round examination against the No. 37-ranked Argentine under the roof inside Qizhong Forest

Sports City Arena that hosted play due to rain.

Sinner will next play either No. 16-ranked Ben Shelton, who beat the Italian here last year, or Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain.

Etcheverry produced the shot of the night with a stunning drop volley to bring up set point in the first set tie-break, which he converted to take the lead.

Sinner began to better find his range in the second and after trading breaks midway through the set, the Italian found another opportunity to level the match.

The momentum was all with Sinner in the third as he broke Etcheverry twice more to advance in 2 hours, 39 minutes under a retractable roof on the Qizhong Forest Sports City Arena. Due to heavy rain, play was restricted to the main court with all matches on outside courts postponed to today.

The 28-year-old Medvedev was forced to dig deep to level the match after the Italian took a tight first set.

In the deciding set, Medvedev's experience and composure came to the fore as he clinched a vital break in the ninth game and held firm to close out the match in 2 hours, 44 minutes. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



XI HAS FINALLY REALIZED WHAT'S AILING CHINA

Once bitten, twice shy. China's latest supercharged stimulus measures have left many investors unconvinced. Despite Beijing's repeated promises to revive growth through rate cuts and special lending programs, little progress has been made. The property market remains stagnant, deflation persists, and youth unemployment has hit a record high.

Investors are asking how this stimulus is different: Is it China's "whatever-it-takes" moment? Has the economy deteriorated enough to force Beijing into action? With FOMO (fear of missing out) kicking in, global asset managers are debating whether the government has the will or fiscal capacity to restore economic confidence.

Looking at the latest policy announcements, it's clear China's leaders have finally grasped what's really ailing the economy and why past measures have failed.

Three key details stand out. First, fiscal power. For the first time since 2018, the Politburo, led by Xi, discussed economic matters in September, focusing heavily on boosting fiscal spending. China is facing a "second wave of shocks," according to Nomura economist Lu Ting. Local governments, once growth engines, have become impediments due to the property market slump and declining land sales revenues. Instead, they have resorted to levying exorbitant fines on traffic violations and other minor infractions to meet financial targets.

In times of economic slowdown, both fiscal and monetary measures must be deployed. While the People's Bank of China has cut rates, the rest of the bureaucracy has been idle, even frustrating citizens and businesses. The latest budget targets a 4.9 trillion yuan deficit for government infrastructure funds, but by August, only 2.1 trillion yuan had been spent.

The Politburo's focus on fiscal spending, borrowing, and the issuance of ultra-long sovereign and special-purpose municipal bonds signals that Xi now understands why monetary easing alone has not worked.

Second, youth unemployment is a growing concern, alongside the property slump. With over 10 million new graduates annually, youth unemployment hit 18.8% in August, despite a change in data methodology that excluded students from the labor force to "improve" the numbers. There has been a noticeable shift in official rhetoric. Last year, Xi told young people to embrace hardship, only to face online ridicule. This year, his tone has changed, emphasizing the need for quality jobs. The government recently announced social security benefits for graduates who remain unemployed for two years.

This reflects an acknowledgment of the structural labor market issues facing Gen Z. As China shifts to new growth sectors like EV manufacturing, crackdowns on real estate and financial services have limited job options. While there are blue-collar jobs, urban youth may be reluctant to work in factories or as food delivery riders for companies like Meituan, even if those jobs pay well. The push for "quality" jobs has become a new official slogan, marking a positive change.

Third, the property market. In May, China introduced a broad rescue package, lowering mortgage rates and converting unsold homes into public housing. The PBOC also created a 300 billion yuan re-lending facility to enable state-owned entities to buy apartments from distressed developers, helping them complete pre-sold flats. However, there was little uptake. Now, the central bank is increasing the re-lending program, providing 100% of the principal instead of 60%. This reflects China's traditional medicine approach: tweak the formula and double the dose if previous remedies don't work.

While being bearish on China remains popular, this round of policy announcements feels different. The new slogans sound more informed and aligned with the public's sentiments. Perhaps the technocrats are now starting to gain more influence. [Abridged]

Courtesy Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

WOMAN GETS REPLY TO HER DREAM JOB APPLICATION - 48 YEARS ON: BBC

THE BUZZ

A woman who spent 48 years wondering why an application for her dream job was never answered has finally found out why, BBC has reported.

Tizi Hodson, 70, from Gedney Hill in Lincolnshire, could not believe her eyes when she opened the post to discover her original letter applying for a job as a motorcycle stunt rider, sent in January 1976, had been stuck behind a post office drawer all these years.

Despite it getting lost in the post, the setback did not hamper her daredevil career as she found a job that took her all over the world.

Describing the letter being returned as "amazing", Ms Hodson told BBC, "I always wondered why I never heard back about the job. Now I know why."

At the top of the letter is a handwritten note that reads: "Late delivery by Staines Post Office. Found behind a draw [sic]. Only about 50 years late."

Ms Hodson doesn't know who returned the letter, or how it even found its way to her.

"How they found me when I've moved house 50-odd times, and even moved countries four or five times, is a mystery," she said. "It means so much to me to get it back all this time later."



Joaquin Phoenix and Brendan Gleeson in a scene from "Joker: Folie à Deux"

SHOW BUSINESS

'JOKER 2' STUMBLES AT BOX OFFICE AMID POOR REVIEWS FROM AUDIENCES AND CRITICS

LINDSEY BAHR, MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**JOKER:** Folie à Deux" is the No. 1 movie at the box office, but it might not be destined for a happy ending.

In a turn of events that only Arthur Fleck would find funny, the follow-up to Todd Phillips' 2019 origin story about the Batman villain opened in theaters nationwide this weekend to a muted \$40 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, less than half that of its predecessor. The collapse was swift and has many in the industry wondering: How did the highly anticipated sequel to an Oscar-winning, billion-dollar film with the same creative team go wrong?

Just three weeks ago, tracking services pegged the movie for a \$70 million debut, which would still have been down a fair amount from "Joker's" record-breaking \$96.2 million launch in Oct. 2019. Reviews were mixed out of the Venice Film Festival, where it premiered in competition like the first movie and even got a 12-minute standing ovation.

But the homecoming glow was short-lived, and

the fragile foundation would crumble in the coming weeks with its Rotten Tomatoes score dropping from 63% at Venice to 33% by its first weekend in theaters. Perhaps even more surprising were the audience reviews: Ticket buyers polled on opening night gave the film a dead-d D CinemaScore. Exit polls from PostTrak weren't any better. It got a meager half star out of five possible.

"Joker: Folie à Deux" cost at least twice as much as the first film to produce, though reported figures vary at exactly how pricey it was to make. Phillips told Variety that it was less than the reported \$200 million; Others have it pegged at \$190 million. Warner Bros. released the film in 4,102 locations in North America. About 12.5% of its domestic total came from 415 IMAX screens.

Internationally, it's earned \$81.1 million from 25,788 screens, bringing its total global earnings estimate to \$121.1 million. In the next two weeks, "Joker 2" will also open in Japan and China.

Second place went to Universal and DreamWorks Animation's "The Wild Robot,"

which added \$18.7 million in its second weekend, bringing its domestic total to nearly \$64 million. Globally, it's made over \$100 million. Warner Bros.' "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" took third place in weekend five, Paramount's "Transformers One" landed in fourth and Universal and Blumhouse's "Speak No Evil" rounded out the top five.

The other big new release of the weekend, Lionsgate's "White Bird," flopped with just \$1.5 million from just over 1,000 locations, despite an A+ CinemaScore.

Overall, the weekend is up from the same frame last year.

Phillips and star Joaquin Phoenix have said they aspired to make something as "audacious" as the first film. The sequel added Lady Gaga into the fold, as a Joker superfan, and delved further into the mind of Arthur Fleck, imprisoned at Arkham and awaiting trial for the murders he committed in the first. It's also a musical, with elaborately imagined song and dance numbers to old standards. Gaga even released a companion album called "Harlequin," alongside the film.

**Kazakhstan** Polls are open in Kazakhstan yesterday for a landmark referendum on building the country's first nuclear power plant, confronting the country's painful legacy as a testing ground for Soviet nuclear weapons. The proposal is backed by the government and President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who hopes to boost the country's energy security.



**Bosnia-Herzegovina** Rescue teams from neighboring countries and the EU arrived yesterday in Bosnia after floods and landslides devastated parts of the country. At least 18 people were killed, and 10 remain missing. Bosnia activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to assist in search and recovery efforts.



**USA** In Tennessee, six workers from a plastics factory remain missing after being swept away by floods from Hurricane Helene. Four of the missing are Mexican-American. Investigations are underway into whether Impact Plastics acted quickly enough in evacuating workers before the disaster struck.



**Congo** has begun this week mpxv vaccinations after months of outbreaks. The 265,000 doses donated by the EU and the U.S. are being administered in Goma, focusing on at-risk populations and healthcare workers. Congo accounts for over 80% of mpxv cases and deaths reported in Africa this year.