

“ I think this species will rapidly go extinct, because the demand is so intense and the price is so high. ”

Gerontologist Malene Hansen, in *Sixth Tone*, a China-based magazine, about reports that smugglers in China are illegally capturing wild long-tailed macaques to meet a large demand for the monkeys in research.

IN BRIEF

Edited by Jeffrey Brainard



Brain specialists propose banning checks in high school hockey games like this one in Biddeford, Maine.

SPORTS MEDICINE

Concussion experts call for rule changes

An expert panel of researchers and clinicians this week called for an end to virtually all checking in youth ice hockey and backed other changes for preventing and treating sports-related concussions (SRCs). A systematic review overseen by the international group found that banning checking (a collision by a defensive player to dislodge the puck) reduced the rate of concussions in child and adolescent games by 58%; requiring mouthguards dropped the rate by 28% at all levels of play. The authors of the consensus statement, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, also conclude that the standard prescription of strict rest and bans on screen time for many days after an SRC may not be beneficial. The group recommends that easy physical activity such as walking begin immediately. As for an especially controversial question in professional sports—the extent to which SRCs cause later neurological disease such as dementia and Parkinson’s disease—the authors, some of them consultants to or employees of professional sports leagues, say research has not proved a causal relationship. They call for further studies.

Diabetes drug deters Long Covid

BIOMEDICINE | The inexpensive and widely used diabetes drug metformin decreased the risk of developing Long Covid in overweight and obese outpatients who took it while acutely ill with SARS-CoV-2 infection, researchers reported last week in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. The risk was 41% lower for the metformin group than for a comparison group receiving a placebo. The study presents the first evidence from a randomized clinical trial that a medication taken by patients who have acute symptoms such as cough and fever can reduce the risk of Long Covid, an ill-defined, chronic condition with symptoms that can include extreme fatigue, breathlessness, and brain fog. About 1100 U.S. trial participants were given placebo or metformin within 7 days of becoming ill. In the following 180 to 300 days, 10.4% in the placebo group reported being diagnosed with Long Covid versus 6.3% in the metformin group.

Global earthquake model released

SEISMOLOGY | A nonprofit scientific group this week released a set of global models and maps describing earthquake hazards and risks to help inform building codes and tailor other precautions in areas most vulnerable to damage. The tools from the Global Earthquake Model Foundation, updated for the first time since 2018, are based on 30 seismic models that together provide about twice the resolution of prior efforts. The team updated and expanded data about inflation, population growth, and building practices, all of which elevate the potential for loss in earthquake-prone regions. The risk models suggest the greatest potential for structural damage is in India; economic loss, Japan; displaced people, Pakistan; and fatalities, China.

Lab safety doesn’t hurt output

WORKPLACE | Prioritizing lab safety does not hamper research productivity, a study of practices at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) shows. In recent decades, laboratory disasters have killed or grievously injured young scientists at several

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institutions, but some researchers say tighter precautions would interfere with getting work done in the lab. To test this viewpoint, researchers examined the productivity of 600 chemistry labs at UCLA, measured by numbers of scientific publications, before and after a fatality from a 2008 fire led the institution to systematically tighten inspections and rules. A few labs increased safety precautions by using safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals. Among all 600 labs, there was no change in productivity after the researchers controlled for other factors, they reported this month in a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper. Lab-safety specialists say many universities have room to improve.

Antacid for the ocean

GEOENGINEERING | A nonprofit group that supports research on manipulating ocean chemistry to remove atmospheric carbon dioxide announced last week its first research grants, \$23 million for nine studies. The ocean already naturally absorbs 30% of annual carbon emissions and contains 50 times more carbon than the atmosphere. The water's natural capacity to store carbon can be boosted by pulverizing and adding alkaline rocks such as basalt or limestone. Alkaline minerals in

the rocks convert dissolved carbon dioxide into long-lasting carbonate and bicarbonate ions, allowing the ocean to absorb more atmospheric carbon dioxide. The Carbon to Sea Initiative, founded by Meta's former chief technology officer, will support projects to examine the efficacy, costs, and environmental effects of ocean alkalization schemes.

Egypt criticizes 'Afrocentrism'

ARCHAEOLOGY | A decades-old Dutch archaeological mission in Egypt has been suspended after authorities there revoked the National Museum of Antiquities's permit to excavate at Saqqara, a necropolis on the outskirts of Cairo. The move was a reaction to the museum's new exhibit "Kemet: Egypt in Hip Hop, Jazz, Soul & Funk," a look at how ancient Egyptian and Nubian culture inspired modern-day Black musicians. In an email to museum Director Wim Weijland last week, an official at Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities accused the museum of "falsifying history" by including an Afrocentric approach to Egypt's past and for depicting Nefertiti with dark skin. The decision follows recent statements by prominent Egyptian archaeologists criticizing Netflix for casting a Black actor to

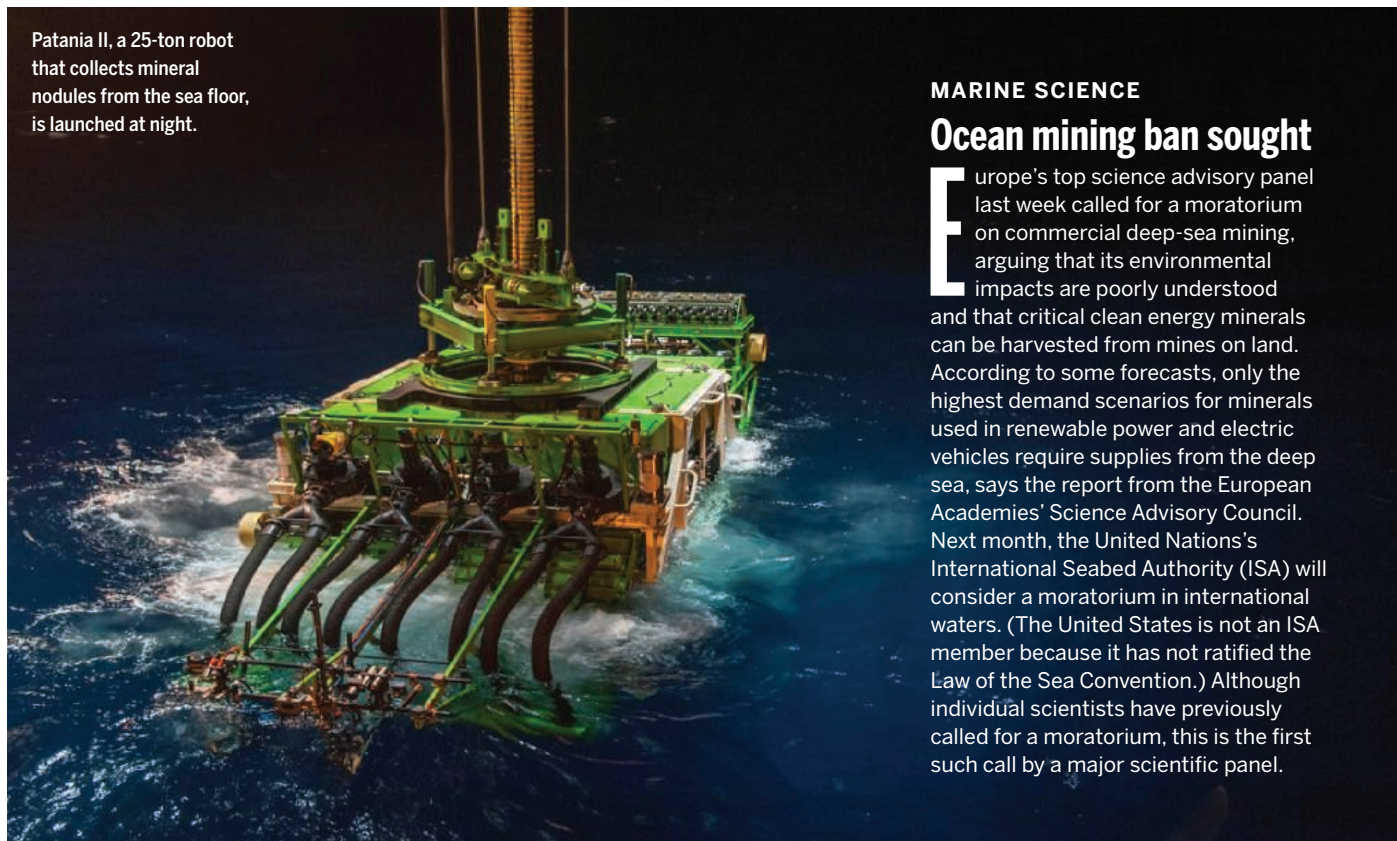
portray Cleopatra in a recent docudrama. In a statement on its website, the museum said its social media has been bombarded with racist comments. "We cordially invite everyone to visit the exhibition and form their own opinions," the museum writes.

Humans entered Asia early

PALEOANTHROPOLOGY | Scientists have dated skull and shin bones from a modern human, found in a cave in northern Laos, to between 68,000 and 86,000 years ago, before the main migration of our species out of Africa that gave rise to all living non-African populations. Genetics-based models agree the main migration occurred sometime between 50,000 and 60,000 years ago. The new study, published this week in *Nature Communications*, bolsters evidence that modern humans sojourned out of Africa more than once and traveled vast distances—although these precocious migrants likely didn't contribute many, if any, genes to modern populations. Previous claims to have found human remains in Southeast Asia from before 60,000 years ago have been met with skepticism. But experts say their confidence in the dating of the Laotian cave is bolstered by the authors' use of a combination of state-of-the-art methods.

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Patania II, a 25-ton robot that collects mineral nodules from the sea floor, is launched at night.



MARINE SCIENCE

Ocean mining ban sought

Europe's top science advisory panel last week called for a moratorium on commercial deep-sea mining, arguing that its environmental impacts are poorly understood and that critical clean energy minerals can be harvested from mines on land. According to some forecasts, only the highest demand scenarios for minerals used in renewable power and electric vehicles require supplies from the deep sea, says the report from the European Academies' Science Advisory Council. Next month, the United Nations's International Seabed Authority (ISA) will consider a moratorium in international waters. (The United States is not an ISA member because it has not ratified the Law of the Sea Convention.) Although individual scientists have previously called for a moratorium, this is the first such call by a major scientific panel.

PHOTO: DEME



News at a glance

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