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LAWMAKER LO CHOI IN URGES GOV'T TO PRIORITIZE PSYCHIATRIC SUPPORT AS THE REGION GRAPPLES WITH A CONCERNING RISE IN SUICIDES

▲ P4

INCREASING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY FROM SCAMS, CYBERCRIMES, KIDNAPPING, AND USURY

▲ P2-3

BEIJING RELEASES THREE AMERICANS IMPRISONED FOR YEARS; US RETURNS FOUR CHINESE NATIONALS

▲ P9



China 46 people were held accountable for a November 2023 gas explosion at Shuangyang Coal Mine, Heilongjiang, killing 11 and injuring six, China Daily reports. An investigation cited illegal operations, chaotic safety management, and poor supervision. Punishments include fines, suspensions, and criminal probes for senior officials.



Indonesia Seven people died in a North Sumatra landslide, triggered by torrential rains, authorities said yesterday. A tourist bus was buried, injuring 10 others. Rescuers face days-long evacuations as vehicles remain trapped. Similar disasters earlier in the week claimed 20 lives in nearby areas.



New Zealand Immigration officials yesterday barred U.S. commentator Candace Owens from entry, citing her October ban from Australia over Holocaust denial remarks. Owens, accused of inciting discord, planned February speaking events. New Zealand prohibits visas for individuals previously excluded from other countries. Owens has not commented.



United States President-elect Trump named retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg (pictured) as special envoy for Ukraine-Russia. Kellogg, an "America First" advocate, faces a complex war amid U.S. security aid to Ukraine. Trump promises swift resolution, hinting at compromises. Kellogg served in Trump's previous administration.

More on backpage

KEY SECRETARY

Wong Sio Chak awaits official confirmation to join Sam Hou Fai's cabinet

▲ P2

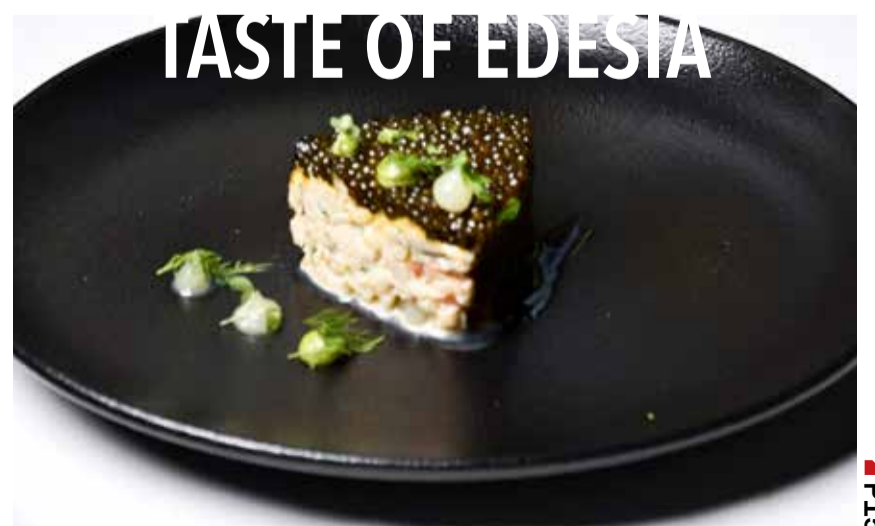


RENATO MARQUES

CORRUPTION

FORMER LIAISON OFFICE STAFF FACING CORRUPTION PROBE

▲ P7



SECURITY

Rising criminal activity attributed to scams,

RENATO MARQUES

The crime rate during the first nine months of this year has increased 12.2%, according to a report from the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, in a press conference yesterday.

The report highlights that significant rises in crimes such as scams, usury, cybercrimes, and kidnapping have contributed the most to this overall increase. Despite a marked decrease in certain types of crime, the total crime rate from January to September remains 2.2% higher compared to the same period in 2019, before the pandemic.

The largest increases were seen in cybercrimes, which more than doubled, surging 104.2% (770 cases). Usury nearly tripled, growing from 73 cases in 2023 to 206 in 2024, while kidnapping cases increased 147.1%, totaling 42 cases. Scams also saw a sharp rise of 31.5%, with 2,160 cases reported, averaging around eight per day.

Sexual crimes have also increased, notably in rape cases, which rose 48.1%, reaching 40 cases. Addressing this, the Secretary emphasized that while the statistical rise is concerning, over 60% of the victims were not Macau residents, and most of the incidents occur-



red in hotel rooms. As a result, he suggested that some of these cases could involve consensual sexual relations. Authorities have often explained that many rape claims are fabricated by individuals, including mainland prostitutes, to extort

money from clients or settle debts. These false reports exploit the swift police response required to handle such serious cases.

To combat prostitution and related illegal activities, the authorities are intensifying inspections

in casinos and surrounding areas. In addition, although child sexual abuse cases decreased by 37.5%, the 15 cases reported by September remain a cause for concern, as the figure is still higher than in 2019. To address this, between January and

September, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) conducted 70 awareness activities on self-protection, attended by over 8,000 participants. The Judiciary Police (PJ) also held 62 talks on sexual abuse prevention, reaching more than 14,000

NEW GOVERNMENT

Wong Sio Chak waiting for official confirmation

RENATO MARQUES

The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, declined to reveal whether he would be part of the upcoming government under the sixth-term Chief Executive (CE), Sam Hou Fai.

When questioned by the media after the press conference on criminal activity in Macau during the first nine months of this year, Wong said the decision does not lie with him but with the CE and the Central government authorities, who must approve the CE's proposal.

"We are all waiting for the time being. Let's wait for the publication [of the



new government composition],” Wong said, avoiding speculation on whether he

would continue heading the Security Secretariat or be offered a different role

in the new government. “This all depends on the Chief Executive first, and

then on the Central government, so it's best we just wait.”

When asked about his own evaluation of his performance as head of the Security Secretariat, especially considering several disciplinary procedures involving members of the Security Forces, Wong responded by emphasizing that the Secretariat has operated not only within the law but with greater transparency than required.

“You know, and society knows, about these disciplinary cases because we decided to publish them and make them public. The law does not require this. We do it in the name of

transparency, to avoid confusion and misinterpretations,” he said, expressing confidence that the work of those under his leadership has been exemplary.

Wong has been mentioned as a potential candidate to transition from the current government of Ho Iat Seng to the upcoming administration under Sam, who will take office Dec. 20. According to legal procedures, only after Sam officially takes office as CE can he propose the list of secretaries for the new government to Beijing authorities, who must ratify the names before the new government can be presented.

On November 1, the Macau Daily Times reported, citing sources familiar with the matter, that Wong would continue in government as one of the key secretaries in the new administration.

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cybercrimes, kidnapping and usury

people, including students, parents and school staff.

FEWER VIOLENT CRIMES THAN IN 2019 BUT MORE THAN IN 2023

Overall, violent crimes have risen by 16.7% compared to the same period last year, with 210 cases reported. However, this is still a significant improvement from 2019, when 313 violent crimes were recorded in the same period. The Secretary pointed out that, particularly in cases such as kidnapping, murder, and serious bodily harm, Macau continues to maintain a very low or even zero incidence rate.

Although the number of serious offenses against physical integrity remains low (just five cases), it has seen a sharp increase, rising fivefold compared to last year. Kidnapping cases have also more than doubled, with 42 reported so far this year.

The authorities have emphasized that these kidnapping cases are primarily related to the gaming industry, often linked to gambling debts. In most cases, victims are not subjected to significant physical violence or life-threatening injuries. The exception was an incident on Aug. 7, when a murder occurred in Macau over an illegal money ex-

change dispute. In this case, police swiftly apprehended two suspects within three hours.

GAMING-RELATED CRIMES UP 'AS EXPECTED'

According to PJ data, there were 1,021 criminal investigations related to gambling, marking an increase of 305 cases, or 42.6%, compared to the same period in 2023. However, authorities pointed out a decrease of 578 cases (36.1%) when compared to the same period in 2019, which the Secretary attributed to the effective work of the police in deterring criminal activity.

"Criminals know they cannot operate here. This reduction is a direct result of the police's efforts," he said.

The rise in gambling-related crimes compared to last year was deemed "inevitable," largely due to the high influx of visitors, especially in the first quarter of the year.

According to the collected data, the most common gambling-related crimes this year were scams, with 254 cases (24.9% of the total), followed by 195 cases of usury (loan sharking), which accounted for 19.1%. Other reported crimes included 150 cases of misappropriation (14.7%), 113 cases of theft

(11.1%), 66 cases of disobedience (6.5%), 36 cases of offenses against physical integrity (3.5%), and 33 cases of kidnapping (3.2%). The re-

maining crimes made up less than 3% of the total.

Wong also addressed the activities of triads or secret societies,

stating that "no unusual movement of secret societies or their members related to the gambling sector has been detected."

MORE 'EYES IN THE SKY' UNTIL 2027

THE sixth phase of the "Macau Public Spaces Video Surveillance System," also known as "Eyes in the Sky," is progressing, with plans to add another 680 cameras across various areas. The locations for these new installations have been preliminarily selected, according to the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, during a press conference on crime in Macau for the first nine months of the year.

The Commissioner General of the Unitary Police Service, Leong Man Cheong, who elaborated on the matter when asked by the media, stated that the new 680 cameras will be installed in various locations across the Peninsula and Islands, but they will not yet include an expansion to Zone A of the new landfills. He explained that the locations have been chosen, and the authorities are now working on the implementation plan, which will proceed once approved by the Per-



sonal Data Protection Bureau.

Leong further noted that the sixth phase is expected to be completed by 2027, with all 680 cameras in operation by that time. Regarding Zone A, Secretary Wong said the installation of cameras in this area will follow the development and infrastructure plans for that zone.

Wong also highlighted that, in the first nine months of this year,

the system has aided in the investigation of 7,267 crimes, including serious violent crimes such as homicide, robbery and arson.

To date, in the first five phases of the project, the authorities have installed 1,701 surveillance cameras since 2016. According to Leong, these cameras have contributed to the resolution of over 28,000 criminal cases. **RM**

CRIME

MAINLAND SIBLINGS SUSPECTED OF COUNTERFEIT CHIP FRAUD

VICTORIA CHAN

A brother and sister from the mainland are under investigation for allegedly using counterfeit casino chips to commit fraud at a Cotai casino, resulting in losses of over HKD150,000.

According to the Judiciary Police (PJ), a Cotai casino received suspected fake chips three times on the same day, leading to a reported loss of HKD100,000. Another victim in the case claimed a loss of HKD50,000.

After identification, the three counterfeit chips with a face value of HKD50,000 were found to have the same characteristics as the counterfeit chips in previously uncovered cases.

On Tuesday, a casino staff member discovered a suspected fake

HKD50,000 chip during a routine count.

Two more fake chips were found at other gaming tables in the same casino. The PJ investigation traced the fraudulent activity to two mainland male gamblers, who confessed to exchanging their proceeds with two mainland "money exchange gangs."

PJ intercepted the mainland siblings at the same casino Wednesday.

One of them was found to be in possession of HKD150,000 in chips and HKD7,000 in cash. The police also discovered transaction records on the siblings' mobile phones, indicating an illegal exchange limit of RMB800,000, suggesting they may have profited by at least HKD8,000 from the fraudulent activities.



ILLEGAL CURRENCY EXCHANGE

SECURITY CHIEF: NEW LAW ENFORCEMENT 'OBVIOUS'

RENATO MARQUES

THE enforcement of the new law to combat illegal gambling and related activities will soon have a more noticeable impact on curbing illegal currency exchange, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, stated yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference on the criminal activities report for the first nine months of this year, Wong explained that while the police have always pursued this unlawful activity, its new classification as a crime will make the "effects more obvious" in reducing such activities.

Wong noted that illegal currency exchange has long posed a security issue in casinos and surrounding areas, with serious crimes like scams, theft, bodily harm, and even murder often

stemming from it. He said this activity has been increasing in recent years, becoming more organized and professional.

Between January and September, authorities intercepted 2,835 "money-changing fraudsters." Of these, 2,635 non-residents were banned from entering Macau for being involved in illegal activities, and information about 1,677 individuals was forwarded to the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau for similar entry bans into casinos.

During the same period, 527 cases of scams linked to illegal currency exchange were reported, with fraudsters employing various methods, such as providing victims with "training banknotes" and forging fake remittance certificates.

In June, in collaboration with mainland authorities, the Judiciary Police

(PJ) and Guangdong Police dismantled three criminal groups using "training notes" to conduct fake remittance scams, resulting in the arrest of 101 suspects. The operation, according to the report, involved a sum of approximately MOP1.6 billion.

In August, PJ and mainland police launched another joint operation targeting this activity on both sides of the border. They arrested 47 mainland residents involved in the illegal activities at various casinos, hotels, residential areas, and Macau's border crossings. The authorities also seized around HKD1.92 million in cash and over HKD700,000 in gambling chips during this operation.

55 ARRESTED SINCE NEW LAW CAME INTO FORCE

Since the new law criminalizing "illegal currency exchange" came into effect Oct. 29, 2024, and up until Nov. 22, authorities have arrested approximately 55 individuals involved in this activity in Macau, particularly around the casino areas, according to the Director of the Judiciary Police, Sit Chong Meng. He also reported that the police seized around MOP7.11 million during the operation.

TOURISM SURGE DRIVES JOB GROWTH AND WAGE RISES

Macau is seeing a surge in manpower demand in tourism-related industries, driven by a substantial increase in visitor arrivals. By the end of September, the number of full-time employees in hotels reached 58,638, an increase of 4,836 or 9.0% year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Similarly, the restaurant sector employed 23,162 workers (up 248 or 1.1%), while the manufacturing sector saw a rise to 7,742 employees (up 207 or 2.7%). Average earnings for full-time employees rose across most sectors, with hotels averaging MOP19,780, restaurants at MOP10,600, and elderly care services at MOP16,980, reflecting year-on-year increases.

SUSPECT ARRESTED IN SEA CUCUMBER FRAUD

A 28-year-old unemployed local man has been arrested for allegedly defrauding five middle-aged men and elderly women in a scheme involving cheap sea cucumbers sold as high-quality goods. The victims reported a total loss of approximately MOP555,000. In May, victims were instructed by the North District Trading House to export "premium sea cucumbers," valued at MOP2,400 to MOP3,000 per kilogram. After the transaction, they found no contact person in the mainland to complete the deal. The suspect fled to the mainland but was apprehended and returned to Macau. Investigations revealed the sea cucumbers were only worth about MOP450 per kilogram.

GROUP PUSHES FOR MORE LEISURE SPACE IN IAO HON

The "People's Alliance for the Construction of Macau" (Aliança de Povo de Instituição de Macau) has called for more leisure spaces in Areia Preta, following a visit with residents to gather feedback on local businesses and quality of life in the area. According to the group, residents expressed concerns over reduced recreational areas due to a sandwich housing project in Iao Hon, urging the need for more open spaces. Earlier this month, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announced that construction will soon begin on the government's first sandwich-class public housing. The association suggested adding facilities like badminton courts and skate parks, while calling for improved maintenance of storm corridors to ensure safety.

INCLUSIVE

GOV'T TO LAUNCH NEW EARLY TREATMENT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NADIA SHAW

TWO new early treatment centers will commence operations in 2025 for children with developmental disabilities, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) announced. According to Yu Ka Wai, director of rehabilitation services at IAS, the early treatment centers will bolster parental support in caring for children with developmental disabilities.

Two new facilities are set to open next year: an early treatment center for children aged 0-3 and a comprehensive day service center for individuals with disabilities. The day service center, located in Mong Ha Social Housing, is scheduled to open next month in December.

In his speech, Wai reiterated that future phases of the rehabilitation action plan will focus on smart technology, barrier-free construction, and fostering a socially inclusive environment. The inclusive cultural and arts fair was jointly organized by seven government departments, showcasing performances from 22 institutions and schools.



The official was speaking on the sidelines of the bureau's "Inclusive Arts and Crafts Performance," held at the Macau Tower Convention and Exhibition Center yesterday, aimed at showcasing the talents of individuals with disabilities while promoting diversity and inclusion.

The performance was strategically scheduled to align with the upcoming International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) on Dec. 3.

This United Nations-sanctioned day aims to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities, with

this year's theme focusing on integration and participation to foster a more inclusive society. According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), approximately 2.5% of Macau's population, or around 16,000 individuals, live with disabilities.

Hon Wai, director of IAS, underscored the importance of providing a platform for individuals with disabilities to express their creativity.

The event featured performances from 16 groups representing various sectors, including schools, child and youth services, and rehabilitation

organizations.

Participants included members from the Macau Intellectual Services Association and the Macau Parents' Association for the Disabled, presenting a diverse program that included lion dances, fashion shows, martial arts demonstrations, and sign language performances.

To enhance accessibility, organizers installed large screens displaying live sign language translation and captions, ensuring that all attendees could engage fully. In his address, Mr. Wai expressed gratitude to participating organizations and emphasized the significance of collaboration among government departments and private institutions in promoting rehabilitation services.

He highlighted that, as of September, Macau's 10-Year Action Plan for Rehabilitation Services had achieved an impressive completion rate of 97.8%.

Looking ahead, he outlined plans to improve independent living opportunities through smart technology and barrier-free environments.

Lawmaker urges enhanced mental health services

NADIA SHAW

LAWMAKER Lo Choi In urged the SAR government to prioritize mental health and psychiatric support services as the region grapples with a concerning rise in suicide rates.

This plea comes in the wake of a tragic incident involving a 17-year-old girl who fell from a building.

In a recent plenary session, Lo emphasized the need for increased support for community services and advocated for a "four-tier joint prevention" strategy to address mental health issues comprehensively.

The statistics are alarming, with Macau recording 88 suicide deaths in



2023, a 10% increase from the previous year. As of the third quarter of this year, there have already been 62 reported suicides, indicating a troubling trend that professionals warn may continue.

A recent survey conducted by a medical school and a professional institution revealed that

27% of respondents are at risk of depression, while 19% face anxiety. Additionally, the Macau Healthy Family Index Survey report highlighted that many families are struggling with life balance, further emphasizing the need for societal support.

While the government has made strides in ad-

ressing mental health through its four-tier mechanism, Lo pointed out that these efforts are insufficient given the complexity of addressing suicide.

Ongoing changes in social structure and environment, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have significantly impacted residents' psychological well-being. He noted that, while there have been improvements in staffing and service integration within health centers, the current framework does not adequately meet the evolving needs of the community.

Lo drew comparisons with Hong Kong, where the government has actively invested in mental health resources and collaborated with various organizations to enhance service availability.

She urged the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture to ensure cohesive policy planning to avoid

fragmented approaches to mental health care.

To effectively combat the rise in mental health issues, Lo called for an increase in resources dedicated to community services.

This includes hiring more social workers and counselors to expand service reach across different demographics. He also advocated for improved student counseling through smaller class sizes and increased investment in educational resources aimed at fostering psychological health.

"Prevention is better than cure," Lo stated, highlighting the critical need for proactive measures. She encouraged both academic institutions and civic organizations to conduct more research into mental health issues and implement community activities designed to raise awareness and provide support.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Wellness is not a Goal, it's a Lifestyle!

“HEALTH” is a BIG concept, one that is seldom fully understood in the modern world. We once believed a healthy lifestyle simply to be one with plenty of exercise and a balanced diet. Though these two aspects are certainly necessary, the concept is far more nuanced and is now approached holistically by also considering the social, emotional, and environmental wellbeing of both the individual and society as a whole. This is the central focus of Macao's “Big Health” industry that not only aims to improve the available medical services but to also elevate the city's health tourism to a new and unprecedented level.

Health and wellbeing are not distant goals we are working towards but rather something we should incorporate into our daily lives, but can we really accomplish this in a few hours of leisure time after work or on our days off? That's not a problem if you work for Wynn Macau, a company that actively cultivates the physical robustness, mental resilience, and personal growth of its employees by incorporating sustainable practices into daily work life. For Wynn, the need to create a conversation around the important topics of fitness and wellness is multifaceted, because it not only directly benefits their own employees and, by extension, their families, but also nurtures an authentic environment in the home, workplace, and society as a whole. This is the underlying driving force that bestows Wynn's hotels with an unparalleled level of authenticity where visitors are embraced in an



“Beyond the Gym: Global Perspectives on Fitness & Wellness” held at Wynn Macau

environment that exudes holistic wellness.

To better understand the many aspects required for a healthy society and health industry, Wynn hosted the “Beyond the Gym: Global Perspectives on Fitness & Wellness” event on November 19 to discuss and explore trends that are shaping the health industry. Fitness clubs, sports SMEs, non-profit organizations, and influencers were all invited to listen to expert speakers which included Olympic hockey medalist Mr. Moritz Fürste, head coach and programmer of Underground Online Coaching & Education Platform Mr. António Barrias, physical therapist Dr. Kit Man Ao, and founder of Defin8 Fitness Ms. Trixie Isla-Velez, to discuss the topics of “Redefining Fitness: Embracing Trends, Enhancing Performan-

ce, and Building Mental Resilience” and “Holistic Health: Integrating Functional Movement, Injury Prevention, and Balanced Nutrition.” Two Wynn executives, Mr. Olivier Bonard, Senior Vice President of Hotel Operations of Wynn Palace and Ms. Angel Vong, Vice President of Finance of Wynn Palace also participated in the panel discussions, sharing their insights on how Wynn stays ahead of global fitness trends.

In his opening speech at the event, Craig Fullalove, chief financial officer and chief administrative officer of Wynn Macau, explained that the company's ongoing commitment to wellness is driven by their desire to “create an environment where our guests and team members can flourish in every aspect of their lives.” This core philosophy has long been a source of motivation for Wynn as they continue to contribute to Macao's thriving community through promoting wellness in society. Through events such as this, Wynn reiterates its dedication to sharing important concepts and practices with peers in the industry to strengthen Macao's growing reputation as a top-tier destination for medical tourism.

This event is only the latest in Wynn's many efforts to elevate its “Tourism + Wellness” services for visitors to Macao and follows shortly after the EliteKinesio Medical Centre was opened at The Spa in Wynn Palace earlier this year, a pioneering center which is the first to provide customized physical therapy treatments at a spa in Macao.

All these initiatives perfectly align with the Health Enterprise Programme rolled out by the Macao government last year and exhibits Wynn's deeply held belief that health starts



Over 100 guests attended the event



The first panel discussion examined the latest changes in the fitness landscape



The second panel discussion shared techniques for injury recovery and explored functional movement



Mr. Craig Fullalove delivered a speech



Capoeira Performance

at home. To encourage visitors to adopt a healthy lifestyle and have a heightened awareness of the many elements such a lifestyle entails, Wynn first aims to encourage its own family of employees to embody the spirit of health and wellness, and by doing so, they are better positioned to help visitors enjoy, appreciate, and even emulate the same principles into their

own daily practices. For Wynn, health tourism not only aims to provide guests with relaxing services and luxurious facilities, but more than this, it should also aim to provide guests with a life-changing experience that equips them with the knowledge and understanding to make health, fitness, and wellness an immutable part of their day-to-day lives.

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT FOR INFERTILE COUPLES

LYNZY VALLES

THE government's recent launch of the "Medical Assisted Reproduction Subsidy Program" has been seen as a significant step towards supporting childbirth and safeguarding the reproductive rights of infertile couples by the Women's General Association of Macau.

However, the association believes the government can subsidize more cycles over time.

The plan aims to alleviate the financial burdens associated with assisted reproductive technologies (ART) by waiving treatment service fees.

Eligible couples can be subsidized up to two cycles at the Macau Union Hospital, thereby addressing previous challenges faced by those seeking treatment due to high costs and limited options.

In Kiang Wu Hospital, assisted reproduction is a relatively



expensive service, costing about MOP70,000 to MOP90,000 per cycle.

Lawmaker and vice-president of the association Wong Kit Cheng said that as the success rates of ART decline with age, many couples may require more than two treatment cycles to achieve pregnancy.

The average age of women seeking this service is relatively ad-

vanced, up to 43 years old.

Drawing inspiration from practices in mainland China, where cities like Beijing and Shenzhen offer multiple reimbursements through medical insurance, the association has advocated for an increase in the number of subsidized treatments over time.

This approach is aimed at adapt-

ing to macro factors such as treatment success rates and local birth trends.

Moreover, the association also called on the government to expand the subsidy plan to include additional medical institutions beyond the currently approved Kiang Wu Hospital, as this would enhance treatment choices for infertile couples and reduce waiting times.

Recently, the private hospital issued a warning about declining birth rates, calling on the government to implement measures to support families who want children but face difficulties.

"The situation is very serious," said Chan Tai Ip, the hospital's deputy director, noting the number of newborns in the first two quarters of this year was around 1,700, similar to 2022's total of over 3,000 – but down sharply from 7,000 in 2016.

Since launching its assisted reproduction services in 2018, the private hospital has provided treatment to more than 300 couples, performing around 190 cycles per year with a 48% success rate, which Chan said is in line with international standards.

The association has also proposed incorporating advanced services such as pre-implantation genetic testing and gamete cryopreservation into funding projects, further bolstering support for those facing infertility.

With infertility rates estimated to be between 12% to 18%, the plan not only provides financial assistance but also aims to raise awareness about ART.

ARTS

Palace Museum opens new cultural heritage center

VICTORIA CHAN

To strengthen the preservation, restoration, and promotion of Macau's cultural heritage, the Centre of Preservation and Transmission for Cultural Heritage of the Palace Museum was officially inaugurated yesterday.

The joint venture between the government and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China aims to establish Macau as a "base for exchange and cooperation with Chinese culture as the mainstream and the coexistence of different cultures."

The inauguration ceremony was jointly hosted by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and the director of the Palace Museum, Wang Xudong.

The new center, located on the ground floor of the Macao Museum of Art, covers nearly 900 square meters and is equipped with specialized laboratories



for the restoration of cultural heritage. It will focus on the preservation and restoration of Macau's World Heritage sites, classified immovable properties, and components of cultural heritage buildings.

The center will also work to elevate the standard of safeguarding cultural heritage through advanced technology and cultivate local talent in the field of restoration.

"This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and

the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, which endow the grand opening of the Centre with particular significance," said Deland Leong, director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau.

She emphasized the city's unique architectural heritage as "a vivid microcosm of over 400 years of multicultural exchanges, mutual learning, harmony, and friendly coexistence," and a critical foundation for Macau's development as a "base of

exchange and cooperation for promoting multicultural coexistence with a pre-eminence of Chinese culture."

Coinciding with the inauguration, the "Forbidden City Architecture Conservation Exhibition" was also launched at the center, showcasing the country's cutting-edge technologies and achievements in architectural heritage preservation.

The center is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., with free admission for residents and tourists.



PALACE OF DOUBLE BRILLIANCE: UNVEILING QIANLONG TREASURES

THE Macau Museum of Art has unveiled a special exhibition that takes visitors on a journey through the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty. The "Palace of Double Brilliance" exhibition, a collaboration between the Palace Museum and the Macau authorities, features a collection of over 130 artifacts, including palace clocks, furniture, calligraphy and painting albums.

The exhibition, showing until March 2, 2025, offers Macau residents and international tourists alike a opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage of China.

Deland Leong, the director of the Cultural Af-

fairs Bureau, emphasized the significance of this event, stating that it is not only a major cultural highlight in Macau but also a platform for the community to deepen its understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture.

Wang Xudong, the director of the Palace Museum, expressed the museum's commitment to collaborating with the Macau SAR to plan more exhibitions and cultural activities.

This initiative aims to promote the transformation and development of China's traditional culture, ensuring its continuous preservation and dissemination in Macau. VC

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

CUI GUOCHAO

Former Liaison Office official facing corruption probe

NADIA SHAW

CUI Guochao, a former official at the Chinese liaison office in Macau, is under investigation for alleged corruption as part of an intensified anti-corruption campaign in Guangdong province.

The Guangdong provincial disciplinary commission announced earlier that Cui is "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law," a term commonly used in China to denote corruption.

Cui, 70, served as the secretary-general of the liaison office from 2006 to 2014. His career also includes a significant tenure as party chief in Zhongshan from 1996 to 2006. The focus of the investigation remains unclear, raising questions about potential links to his previous roles in both Zhongshan and Macau.

This inquiry is part of a broader crackdown on retired officials in Guangdong. Recently, Xu

Jianhua, former party secretary of Dongguan, was detained on corruption charges, joining a list that includes Zhong Ganquan and Li Yuquan, both previously high-ranking officials in the region.

The Chinese Central Commission for Discipline Inspection has emphasized its commitment to combating corruption among all cadres, stating that "any cadre involved in corruption and power abuse for personal gain will find no peace." Reports indicate that over 50 retired officials have been detained in Guangdong since last year.

In a related development, investigations into departmental officials have surged, with 109 department-level and 1,321 division-level officials scrutinized in the first three quarters of 2024 alone, reflecting a nearly 50% increase from the previous year, as reported by the South China Morning Post.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Committee focuses on database system, transportation safety

VICTORIA CHAN

DISCUSSIONS held recently by the Hazardous Substances Consultative Committee focused on implementing a new hazardous substances database system and disseminating safety awareness.

The committee's chairman and Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said the tasks of hazardous substance safety are long-term, and supervisory departments should focus on problems encountered in actual work, reference hazardous substance accidents in surrounding areas, and use these risk elements as training projects.

According to the official, this will strengthen the investigation of hazardous substance safety risks, intensify publicity and awa-



reness-raising, and ensure that the measures are effective and targeted.

The vice-chairman of Transport Bureau (CB), Leong Iok Sam, presented the new database system, which improves communication and declaration of obligations between departments, strengthening safety management.

Regarding compressed bottle transport, "Guidelines for the Transportation of Compressed Bottles" were drawn up by the

Fire Services Bureau, Public Security Police and CB. These guidelines will require sectors to strictly comply with responsibilities, reducing safety risks.

Wong stressed the need for continuous improvement, input of suggestions, and close attention to safety issues as Macau approaches its 25th anniversary.

He called for strengthened communication and cooperation among relevant departments to build a social safety barrier for the city.

慶祝中華人民共和國成立75周年
澳門回歸祖國25周年
Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China,
the 25th Anniversary of Macau's Return to the Motherland.

「金沙中國表演藝術計劃」呈獻
Sands China Performing Arts Programme Presents

古典新章： 黃昏之約演奏會

Classics Reimagined: Golden Hour Harmonies

11/30 星期六 SATURDAY
5:00PM 雅諾斯卡樂團10周年精選音樂會
Highlights from Janoska Ensemble 10 years Concert

12/01 星期日 SUNDAY
4:00PM 雅諾斯卡樂團大師班
Masterclass by Janoska Ensemble
5:30PM 李俊樂口琴演奏會
Gordon Lee Harmonica Concert

牛牛 "Lifetime" 鋼琴獨奏會
Niu Niu "Lifetime" Piano Recital

雅諾斯卡樂團
Janoska Ensemble

牛牛
Niu Niu

李俊樂
Gordon Lee

金沙中國片區活化項目
Sands China's Community Revitalization Programme

澳門文化中心廣場
Macau Cultural Center Plaza

憑票入場，門票可於澳門售票網荷蘭園及氹仔門市免費索取。
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MACAU GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

HEALTH

HPV VACCINE MAKERS EYE GROWTH OVERSEAS

LI JIAYING & LIU ZHIHUA,
CHINA DAILY

As the domestic market approaches a potential saturation point and intensified price competition becomes more of a challenge, China's human papillomavirus vaccine manufacturers are seeking to expand incremental markets and explore overseas opportunities to secure further growth.

According to its latest financial report, in the first three quarters, Beijing-based Wantai Biopharm, a major HPV vaccine producer in China, reported revenue of 1.95 billion yuan (\$269 million), down 60.8 percent year-on-year, while net profit stood at 267 million yuan, a significant decline of 85.25 percent.

Wantai Biopharm in its statement attributed the sharp decline in performance to factors including extended market impact of nine-valent HPV vaccines, intensified competition and inventory adjustments, which have all added up to sales declines.

Similarly, over the same period, another major player in the country's HPV vaccine market — Kunming, Yunnan province-based Walvax Biotechnology — also recorded revenue of 2.14 billion yuan, a decrease of 32.2 percent year-on-year, with a net profit of 256 million yuan, down 53.7 percent, which points to sustained sales pressure on vaccine companies in the sector.

Currently, five HPV vaccines have been approved for use in China — three bivalent, one quadrivalent, and one nine-valent. Among these, domestic manufacturers account for two bivalent HPV vaccines produced by Wantai and Walvax. By the end of August, 18 clinical trial approvals



A medical staff member injects domestically produced bivalent HPV vaccine to a girl in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province

had been granted for domestically developed HPV vaccines from 10 companies.

Wantai's bivalent vaccine, the first domestically approved HPV vaccine, had previously driven substantial growth for the company.

Launched in May 2020, its batch release volume reached over 2 million doses that year, generating nearly 700 million yuan in annual revenue and accounting for 80 percent of the company's vaccine business. The vaccine's release volume surpassed 10 million doses in 2021 and rocketed to 25 million doses in 2022, said the National Institutes for Food and Drug Control.

However, with more players entering the market and intensified government procurement competition, sales performance of the bivalent vaccine has been greatly impacted.

In 2023, its annual sales plummeted to about 13 million doses, with the price dropping significantly from the original release level of over 300 yuan to around

110 yuan per dose that year.

A historical point came when earlier this year, Wantai's bivalent HPV vaccine was priced at 86 yuan per dose in Jiangsu province's government procurement project, marking the official entry of domestic bivalent HPV vaccines into the "below 100 yuan" era. Yet, price reductions did not stop there.

In August, Shandong province's online procurement platform revealed that Walvax's bivalent HPV vaccine was priced at just 27.5 yuan per dose — about the same price as a cup of coffee.

"Eyeing a higher public health level, a lot of local governments have beefed up efforts to provide free bivalent HPV vaccines for females under 15 through government procurement," said Tao Ran, CEO of Beijing Health Guard Biotechnology Inc, an innovative vaccine producer.

According to the National Health Commission, as of mid-October, the free HPV vaccination policy had covered about 40 percent of women of eligible age

nationwide.

Tao suggested that as competition intensifies in the lower-valent vaccine market, breakthroughs may lie in the higher-valent vaccine segment and the development of vaccines for male indications.

Health Guard's nine-valent HPV vaccine, covering both male and female indicators, is currently in phase-III clinical trials. Nine-valent products of other players, such as Jiangsu Recbio Technology Co Ltd and Shanghai-based Bovax Biotechnology, are also in advanced clinical stages. Notably, Wantai's application for market entry of its nine-valent HPV vaccine was accepted in August, marking the first such domestic application.

"Lower and higher-valent vaccines may complement each other in meeting different market needs," Tao said.

Tao also said with the sequential approval of domestic nine-valent vaccines, competition is expected to gradually extend from the female market to the

male market and eventually boost overall immunization levels worldwide.

Data from consultancy Frost & Sullivan showed that in 2020, the number of males in China eligible for HPV vaccination (aged 9 to 45) reached 344 million, requiring about 980 million doses for full vaccination coverage. To date, there are merely three HPV vaccines designed for male use that have entered phase-III clinical trials in China.

"Many women are already well-informed about cervical cancer and HPV vaccines. With the expansion of indicators to include males in the future, more people are expected to gain awareness of this topic, which will further aid in educating the public about cervical cancer prevention and eradication efforts," said Sun Xiaodong, deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

For many Chinese vaccine manufacturers, tapping the expanding overseas markets has also become a key step to counter fierce domestic competition and achieve broader growth.

For example, Health Guard said it is conducting phase-III trials for its nine-valent HPV vaccine in Indonesia and plans to submit a market application to relevant departments by 2025. The company also seeks broader market expansion in other ASEAN countries, it said.

Wantai's bivalent HPV vaccine has also gained market access in 18 countries, primarily in Asia and Africa, with registration applications underway in 10 additional countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, the company said. **MDT/CHINA DAILY**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China explores 'Splendour of Chinese Bronzes'



Sands China recently organized a tour for approximately 30 team members to the Macao Museum of Art, showcasing the exhibition "Splendour of Chinese Bronzes: Masterpieces from the National Museum of China."

This event was part of the

company's commitment to professionalism education and celebrated two significant anniversaries: the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to China.

The exhibition features over 150 bronze artifacts, highligh-

ting cultural significance and craftsmanship.

Wilfred Wong, executive vice chairman of Sands China, expressed hope team members would deepen their understanding of Chinese civilization and its artistic heritage.

Participants reflected on their pride in China's artistic achievements, emphasizing the importance of promoting this rich history to visitors.

In addition to this event, Sands China has conducted numerous educational activities aimed at enhancing team members' professionalism and cultural appreciation, contributing to their overall development within the context of national growth.

MGM responsible gaming program concludes



MGM recently concluded its "Responsible Gaming Campus Ambassador" program in partnership with the City University of Macau (CityU), aimed at promoting financial literacy and responsible gaming among

students. Running from September to November, the program culminated in a certificate award ceremony for nearly 40 ambassadors from various disciplines, including International Tourism and Ma-

agement and Social Work.

The program featured thematic courses led by industry experts, focusing on responsible gaming policies and the gaming industry's role in sustainable development. Participants also engaged in practical activities, such as organizing responsible gaming roadshows on campus.

Robert Chan, Pro-Rector of CityU, noted that the program equips students with essential skills to advocate for responsible gaming and contribute positively to society. Overall, this initiative fosters a sense of social responsibility among participants while enhancing their communication and teamwork abilities.

ERIC TUCKER, AAMER
MADHANI & MATTHEW LEE,
WASHINGTON

DIPLOMACY

Beijing releases three Americans it imprisoned for years, US returned four people to China

THREE American citizens imprisoned for years by China have been released and are returning to the United States, the White House said yesterday [Macau time] announcing a rare diplomatic agreement with Beijing in the final months of the Biden administration.

The Chinese government also announced yesterday that the U.S. had returned four people to China, including at least three Chinese citizens who it said had been held for “political purposes,” and a person who had been sought by Beijing for crimes and had been living in the United States. It did not identify the four.

The three Americans released by Beijing are Mark Swidan, Kai Li and John Leung, all of whom had been designated by the U.S. government as wrongfully detained by China. Swidan had been facing a death sentence on drug charges while Li and Leung were imprisoned on espionage charges.

“Soon they will return and be reunited with their families for the first time in many years,” the White House said in a statement.

The release comes just two months after China freed David Lin, a Christian pastor from California who had spent nearly 20 years behind bars after being convicted of contract fraud.

The release of Americans deemed wrongfully detained in China has been a top agenda item in each conversation between the U.S. and China, and this week's development suggests a willingness by Beijing to engage with the outgoing Democratic administration before Republican President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House in January.

Trump took significant actions against China on trade and diplomacy during his first term. He has pledged to continue those policies in his second term.

Still, the two countries have

AP PHOTO



Harrison Li holds a photo of his father, Kai Li

maintained a dialogue that has included a partial restoration of military-to-military contacts. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met this month to discuss potential improvements.

In a separate but related move, the State Department on Wednesday lowered its travel warning to China to “level two,” advising U.S. citizens to “exercise increased caution” from the norm when traveling to the mainland. The alert had previously been at “level three,” telling Americans they should “reconsider travel” to China in part because of the “risk of wrongful detention” of Americans.

The new alert removes that wording but retains a warning that the Chinese government “arbitrarily enforces local laws, in-

cluding exit bans on U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries, without fair and transparent process under the law.”

The Biden administration had raised the cases of the detained Americans with China in multiple meetings over the past several years, including this month when Biden spoke to Xi on during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru.

Politico was first to report the men's release, which it said was part of a prisoner swap with the U.S. The White House did not immediately confirm that any Chinese citizens in American custody had been returned home.

However, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning announced in Beijing yesterday that “three Chinese citizens have

returned to the motherland safe and sound.”

“China always firmly opposes U.S. suppression and persecution of Chinese nationals out of political purposes, and we will continue taking necessary measures to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese nationals,” she said.

She added that a fourth person, “a fugitive who escaped to the U.S. many years ago, has also been repatriated to China.”

The fourth person's nationality was not identified. Mao said “this shows that there will be no safe haven forever for criminals. The Chinese government will continue our efforts to repatriate the fugitives and recover criminals and illegal possessions until every fugitive is held accountable.”

Senators from both U.S. political parties praised the release of the Americans. Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas said he was “overjoyed” — Swidan's mother lives in Texas — and credited senior Biden administration officials with having “worked tirelessly to secure this achievement.”

Li, a Chinese immigrant who started an export business in the U.S. and lived in New York, was detained in September 2016 after flying into Shanghai. He was placed under surveillance, interrogated without a lawyer and accused of providing state secrets to the FBI.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who said he had worked for years to try to secure Li's release, welcomed the news.

Leung was sentenced last year to life in prison on spying charges. He was detained in 2021, by the local bureau of China's counterintelligence agency in the southeastern city of Suzhou after China had closed its borders and imposed tight domestic travel restrictions and social controls to fight the spread of COVID-19.

After Leung's sentencing, the U.S. recommended — though without citing specific cases — that Americans reconsider traveling to China because of arbitrary law enforcement and exit bans and the risk of wrongful detentions.

Swidan had been jailed for the last 12 years on a drug charge and, along with Li and Leung, was considered by the State Department to be wrongfully detained.

MDT/AP

CORRUPTION

High-ranking military official placed under investigation, defense ministry says

CHINA has suspended a high-ranking military official while he is being investigated, its Defense Ministry announced yesterday.

The official, Miao Hua, is director of the Political Work Department on the powerful Central Military Commission that oversees the People's Liberation

Army. He is one of five members of the body that oversees the world's largest standing military, in addition to China's leader Xi Jinping, who heads the commission.

Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said Miao is under investigation for “serious violations of discipline,” which

usually alludes to issues of corruption.

This is the third recent major shakeup for China's defense establishment. In June, China announced that former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe were accused of corruption and expelled from the party. They were being investiga-

ted for corruption and bribery, after initially facing suspension.

In Xi's first term as Party Secretary, he was known for a multi-year campaign against corruption that has brought down numerous high-profile political rivals, and thousands of officials. This has led some to allege a widespread purge of offi-

cers suspected of conspiring with outside forces or simply being insufficiently loyal to Xi.

High-ranking officers occupy an elevated position in Chinese politics and can command extensive privileges, official and unofficial.

Miao being placed under investigation comes

after the Financial Times reported that Defense Minister Dong Jun was under investigation and suspended.

The Defense Ministry spokesperson said Dong was not under any investigation and called the report a “sheer fabrication.”

Miao, by sitting on the commission that is a Communist Party committee, outranks Dong and anyone who holds the position of defense minister, as Communist Party positions are more powerful than government institutions in China. MDT/AP

SOUTH KOREA

Central bank cuts key interest rate to nurse a slower economy

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea's central bank lowered its key policy rate for a second straight month and said the country's economy will grow at a slower pace than it initially anticipated.

Following a policy meeting, the Bank of Korea cut its benchmark interest rate by a quarter percentage point to 3%. The bank lowered its outlook for the country's economic growth to 2.2% from 2.4% for this year and to 1.9% from 2.1% for 2025.

The bank is taking steps to lower borrowing costs despite the lingering effects of high inflation and alarming levels of household debt, as the economy falters.

The bank cut its policy rate by a quarter percentage point to 3.25% in October in its first rate cut since May 2020 in the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bank said the country's trade-dependent economy faces growing uncertainty in global economic trends and inflation



People walk on a shopping street in Seoul

that could be impacted by the policies of President-elect Donald Trump and ongoing geopolitical conflicts.

Since winning reelection, Trump has vowed to slap huge new tariffs on foreign products entering the United States, including those from Mexico, Canada and

China, which he insists will create more domestic jobs and shrink the federal deficit.

In a news conference, Bank of Korea Governor Rhee Chang Yong said the bank faced a difficult decision over whether to freeze the rate or lower it. But a bigger-than-expected decline in exports during

the last quarter and Trump's election win moved the needle.

"We had been contemplating the uncertainties that would be brought by the results of the U.S. presidential election, but a 'red sweep' where the House and Senate were all won by one side was something we did not anticipate,"

Rhee said.

Rhee said Trump's win "increased the uncertainty in policy, not only for us but for the world," but said it was too early to predict how Trump's steps on tariffs would impact South Korean exports.

The rate cut could help spur domestic consumption by putting more money into the economy, but is unlikely to reverse the slowdown in exports, which is due to long-term competitiveness issues in key industries that should be addressed through policy changes or restructuring, Rhee said.

Rhee said three of the six monetary policy committee members believe that the bank should lower the rate further within the next three months to help revive the sluggish economy. The bank will closely monitor trends in household debt and property prices before considering another cut, he said.

The bank said in a statement that South Korea's economy has been losing momentum due to weak domestic spending, slowing exports and rising unemployment.

"Going forward, domestic consumption will see a mild recovery, but the recovery in exports is likely to be weaker than initially anticipated due to intensifying competition and strengthening of protectionist trade policies in key industries," it said. **MDT/AP**

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



JAMEY KEATEN, LUCERNE

SWITZERLAND

WOULD you trust an "AI Jesus" with your innermost thoughts and troubles?

Researchers and religious leaders yesterday [Macau time] released findings from a two-month experiment through art in a Catholic chapel in Switzerland, where an avatar of "Jesus" on a computer screen — tucked into a confessional — took questions by visitors on faith, morality and modern-day woes, and offered responses based on Scripture.

The idea, said the chapel's theological assistant, was to recognize the growing importance of artificial intelligence in human lives, even when it comes to religion, and explore the limits of human trust in a machine.

After the two-month run of the "Deus in Machina" exhibit at Peter's Chapel starting in late August, some 900 conversations from visitors — some came more than once — were transcribed anonymously. Those behind the project said it was largely a success: Visitors often came out moved or deep in thought, and found it easy to use.

A small sign invited visitors to enter a confessional — chosen for its intimacy — and below a lattice screen across which penitent believers would usually speak with a priest, a green light signaled the visitor's turn to speak, and a red one came on when "AI Jesus" on a computer screen on the other side was responding.

Often, a lag time was needed to wait for the response — a testament to the technical complexities. After exiting, nearly 300 visitors filled out questionnaires that informed the report released this week.

OF LOVE, WAR, SUFFERING AND SOLITUDE

Philipp Haslbauer, an IT specialist at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts who pulled together the technical side of the project, said the AI responsible for taking the role of "AI Jesus" and generating responses was GPT4o by OpenAI, and an open-source version of the company's Whisper was used for speech comprehension.

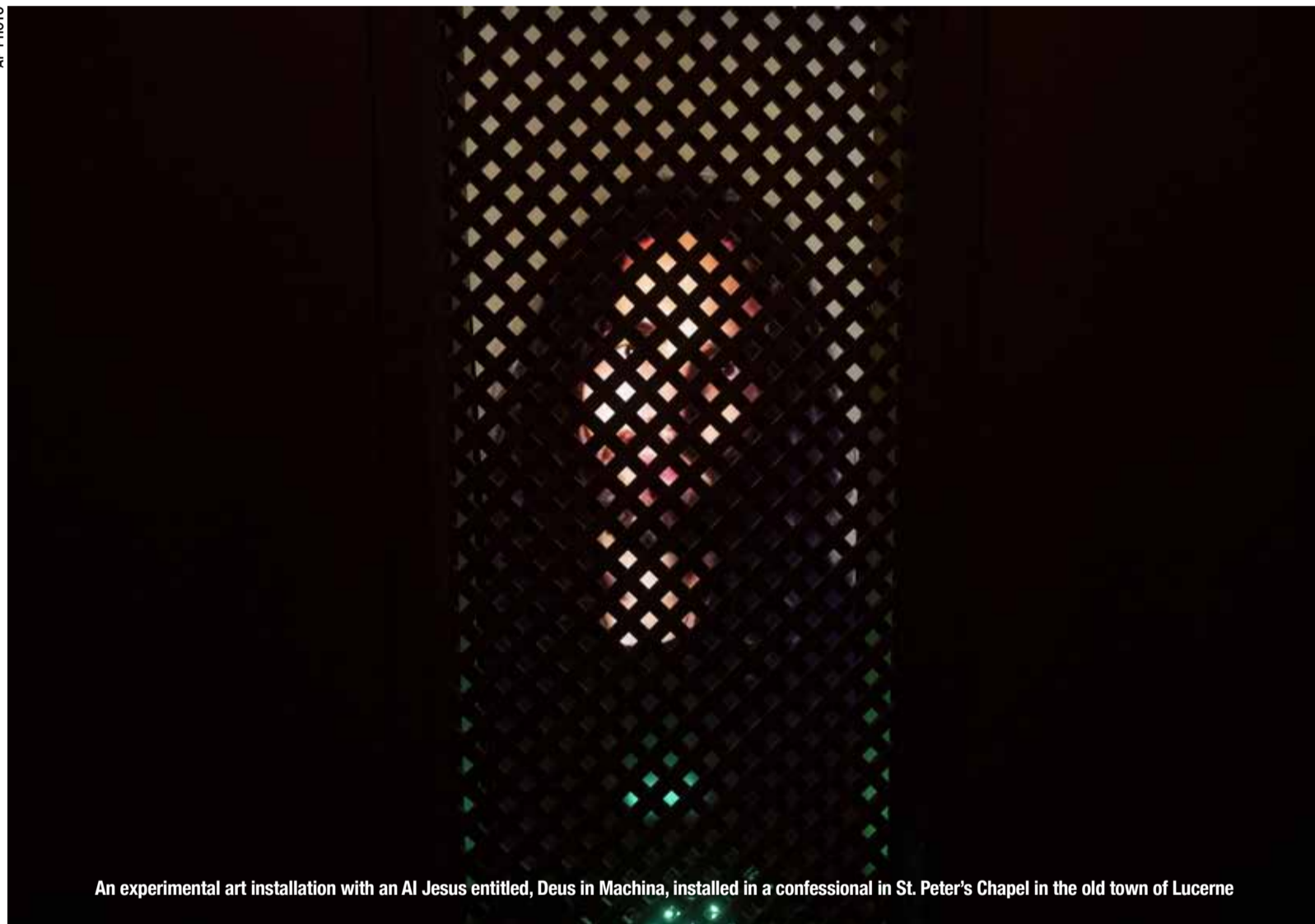
The Interactive Avatar from Heygen was used to produce voice and video from a real person, he said. Haslbauer said no specific safeguards were used "because we observed GPT4o to respond fairly well to controversial topics."

Visitors broached many topics, including true love, the afterlife, feelings of solitude, war and suffering in the world, the existence of God, plus issues like sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church or its position on homosexuality.

Most visitors described themselves as Christians, though agnostics, atheists, Muslims, Buddhists and Taoists took part too,

AI Jesus' project to bridge digital and the divine draws users' praise, as questions remain

AP PHOTO



An experimental art installation with an AI Jesus entitled, Deus in Machina, installed in a confessional in St. Peter's Chapel in the old town of Lucerne

according to a recap of the project released by the Catholic parish of Lucerne.

About one-third were German speakers, but "AI Jesus" — which is conversant in about 100 languages — also had conversations in languages like Chinese, English, French, Hungarian, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

'WORK OF THE DEVIL?'

"What was really interesting (was) to see that the people really talked with him in a serious way. They didn't come to make jokes," said chapel theologian Marco Schmid, who spearheaded the project. Most visitors were aged 40 to 70, and more Catholics respondents found the experience stimulating than did Protestants, the report showed.

Schmid was quick to point out that the "AI Jesus" — billed as a "Jesus-like" persona — was an artistic experiment to get people thinking about the intersection between the digital and the divine, not substitute for human interaction or sacramental confessions with a priest, nor was it intended to save

pastoral resources.

The Catholic Church from the Vatican on down has been wrestling with the challenges — and possible opportunities — presented by the explosion in public interest in AI since generative artificial intelligence captured the world's attention two years ago when ChatGPT made its debut.

The Vatican has appointed a friar from a medieval Franciscan order as its top expert on AI, and a Lutheran church in Bavaria served up sermons delivered by a chatbot last year. Pope Francis, in his annual peace message for this year, pushed for an international treaty to ensure the ethical use of AI technology.

Haslbauer acknowledged his own sort of Doubting Thomas moment: He's sensitive to public reaction and has noted chatter on social media that the project is "blasphemous" or the "work of the devil."

"If you read comments on the internet about it, some are very negative — which is scary," Haslbauer, whose long-haired look featured as a basis for the image

of the virtual Jesus.

In a demonstration of the technology in the chapel, Haslbauer queried AI Jesus about its message for a troubled world, and about whether AI could be helpful as a way for people to find God.

"All knowledge and wisdom ultimately come from God," the chatbot said in a soothing voice, after a pause to respond, and the image briefly cracked. "If used wisely, AI can indeed be a tool to explore the wonders of creation, deepen our understanding of Scripture, and foster connections among people."

"Yet it remains essential to seek God with all your heart and soul beyond any technology," it added.

A GOOD SIDE, AND DOWNSIDES

Kenneth Cukier, a journalist, author and expert with the U.S.-based nonprofit group called "AI and Faith," said if "AI Jesus" helps people connect deeper to themselves and the world, it "has to be a good thing."

"It will lead to better individuals and a better world," he said.

"However — and there's a big however — this does feel a little bit infantile, and pardon my pun, machine-like."

"The risk is that it pulls people, ultimately, farther away from that which is more meaningful, deeper and authentic in spirituality," said Cukier, co-author of "Big Data: A Revolution that Will Transform How We Work, Live and Think."

For Schmid, the exhibit was a pilot project — and he doesn't foresee a second coming of AI Jesus anytime soon.

"For us, it was also clear it was just a limited time that we will expose this Jesus," he said, adding that any return would need to be done after deeper thought.

"We are discussing ... how we could revive him again," he said, noting interest from parishes, schoolteachers, researchers and others as the project got media attention in Switzerland and beyond. "They all are interested and would like to have this AI Jesus. So we have now a little bit to reflect on how we want to continue." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



In this photo taken from video released by the Russian Defense Ministry yesterday, an Su-34 bomber of the Russian air force drops bombs on Ukrainian positions at an undisclosed location

PUTIN'S WAR

MASSIVE RUSSIAN MISSILE AND DRONE ATTACK TARGETS UKRAINE'S ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

HANNA ARHIROVA & BARRY HATTON, KYIV

RUSSIA conducted a "massive" attack against Ukraine's energy infrastructure yesterday, firing nearly 200 missiles and drones and leaving more than a million households without power, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia's second major aerial attack on Ukraine's power grid in less than two weeks amplified fears that the Kremlin aims to cripple the country's power generation capacity before winter.

"Attacks on energy facilities are happening all over Ukraine," Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko said in a post on Facebook. He added that emergency power outages were implemented nationwide.

In some regions, Kalibr cruise missiles with cluster munitions smashed into civilian targets, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, calling it "an insidious escalation." Cluster munitions release numerous small bombs over a wide area, making them dangerous to civilians both during and after an attack.

Ukrainian officials have warned recently that Russia was stockpiling cruise and ballistic missiles, presumably for another pre-winter aerial campaign against Ukraine's

power grid. Ukrainian officials have in the past accused Russia of "weaponizing winter."

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during the almost three years of war with Russia, and rolling electricity blackouts are common. Kyiv's Western allies have sought to help Ukraine protect power generation with air defense systems and funds for rebuilding.

Russia in previous years has targeted Ukraine's electricity generation, aiming to deny civilians critical heating and drinking water supplies during the bitter winter months and break Ukrainian spirits. The attacks also seek to hobble Ukraine's defense industry that is now producing missiles, drones and armored vehicles, among other military assets.

The war has been going in Russia's favor in recent months as its bigger army uses its advantages in manpower and equipment to push Ukrainian forces backward in eastern areas, though its offensive has been slow and costly.

Explosions were reported in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Rivne, Kholmynskyi, Lutsk, and many other cities in central and

western Ukraine.

Zelenskyy urged Western countries to accelerate delivery of promised air defense weaponry. Ukrainian officials in the past have grumbled that military aid is slow to arrive.

"Each such attack proves that air defense systems are needed now in Ukraine, where they save lives, and not at storage bases," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia's stockpiling cruise and ballistic missiles, possibly for another pre-winter aerial campaign

The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andrii Yermak, said in a Telegram post that Russia had stockpiled missiles to strike Ukrainian infrastructure and wage war against civilians during the cold season. "They were helped by their crazy allies, including from North Korea," he wrote.

Western governments and South Korea say North Korea in recent months has intensified its military support for Russia.

The head of the Lviv region in western Ukraine, Maksym Kozlytskyi, said the attack left more than half a million households

without electricity.

Over 280,000 households in the northwestern Rivne region were without electricity because of the attack, according to regional Gov. Oleksandr Koval. Running water supplies were also patchy in affected areas. Some schools in Rivne city switched to online classes.

There were also strikes on the bordering Volyn region, where 215,000 households had no electricity, regional head Ivan Rudnytskyi said. All critical infrastructure that lost power was switched to generators.

Energy infrastructure was also targeted in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region, local officials said. Air defenses were activated there, and emergency power outages were introduced.

Local officials ordered the opening of "points of invincibility" — shelter-type places where people can charge their phones and other electrical devices and get refreshments during blackouts.

In Kyiv, where the air raid alert lasted over nine hours, missile debris fell in one neighborhood, local officials said. No casualties were reported. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 GRAHAM HILL KILLED IN AIR CRASH



One of Britain's greatest motor racing drivers has been killed in a plane crash in south-east England.

Graham Hill, 46, who retired from the sport in July 1975, was killed instantly along with the four other occupants in his Piper Aztec - all members of the Embassy Hill team.

Hill was piloting the plane when he clipped a row of trees on Arkley golf course in Hertfordshire, just before 2200 GMT.

The two-times world champion was flying Embassy Hill manager Ray Brimble, fellow driver Tony Brise, and two mechanics from France to attend a party in London.

Arley Golf Club steward Ted Dickins said visibility had been very poor at the time of the accident.

"It was terrible - the ambulances couldn't even see the bunkers as they were driving down," he said.

Friend and Elstree Aero Club chairman Spencer Flack said the champion driver was taking a risk by trying to land in bad conditions but told reporters he was an experienced flier.

"He was a skilful pilot who tried to get in and failed.

"In those conditions it's just a matter of feet and seconds between life and death," he said.

Government accident investigation officials are sifting through the wreckage to try to establish the cause of the crash.

Hill is the only driver to have won the Triple Crown of the Indianapolis 500, the 24 hours of Le Mans and the Formula One World Championship.

He won the world title with BRM in 1962 and again in 1968, with Lotus.

Hill retired from Formula 1 mid-season so he could concentrate on coaching Brise, a promising new driver in his own fledgling team Embassy Hill.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Three thousand people attended Graham Hill's funeral in St Alban's, Hertfordshire, on 5 December.

An inquest found he was flying only 60 ft (18.3m) above the ground when the plane hit the tree - but did not realise because of the poor visibility.

Verdicts of accidental death were returned for all six occupants of the plane.

Hill's son, Damon, followed his father into Formula One racing and won the world championship in 1996.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Get practical with shared finances to cut costs and increase income. Withhold judgment or criticism and adjust contributions for account growth.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Rely on teamwork to navigate a challenge. Change direction intuitively. Learn from another's expertise. A creative spark ignites into flame; it could even get romantic.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Things are getting busy. Pick up the pace. Get your heart pumping. Physical action gets results. Grab an unexpected opportunity benefiting your work and health.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Relax and enjoy fun with friends, family and someone special. Conditions favor romance, recreational and playful activities. Savor time with elders and kids.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Practical domestic improvements satisfy. Try new curtains or textiles for a quick change. Consider color and lighting. Reduce clutter. Cook up something wonderful.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Creativity swirls and drips from your pen or keyboard. Brilliant ideas deserve investigation. Connect with people who inspire you. Learn from the best.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Take advantage of surprising developments. A challenge could become a lucrative opportunity. Do the background work to develop naturally.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Pamper yourself with a new style. Prepare for an upcoming spotlight. Do the work to have things appear effortless. You're making a good impression.

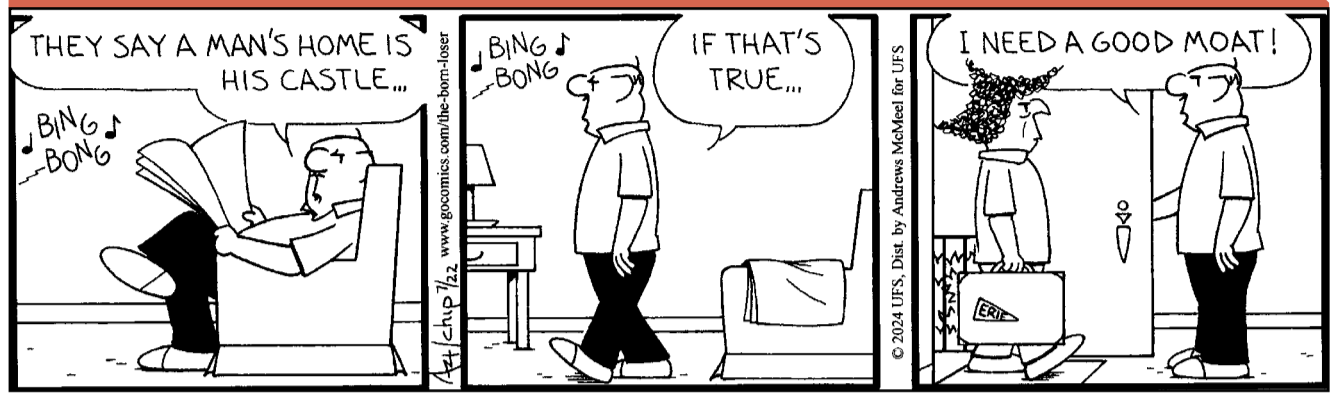
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Get productive behind closed doors. Clean, sort and organize your spaces. Consider where you've been and what's ahead. Meditate on upcoming possibilities.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Rely on teamwork and collaboration to manage unexpected circumstances. Huddle to determine who does what, and then get into action. There's strength in numbers.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Things could seem tricky at work. Avoid unnecessary quarrels. Manage an existing deadline despite unpredictable events. An unusual option appears.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Enjoy classes, seminars and conferences. Studies, research and travel present unexpected wonders. Explore through your own eyes or another's.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY					EASY+				
	4		9	6 2		1	5 3		
6 7		3		8		3			6 7
	9	6 4	5		4	6 2			3
4	7	1 5				7		8 1 3	
8	9		2	1		8 4 5			
		9 8 7	3		8 2 7		1		
	3	8 1	2			8		4 3	5
	1		6	7 8	6 9				7
2 8	5		4			9 7	4		

MEDIUM					HARD				
1	3			8	1		8		
			3 6 4				2		7
	6 1 4						7		3
4			2			1		5 4	
	1		3	7	2				
		9		4		7			
		2 5 7			4		6		1
	6 1 8						5 3		
2			4 9						8

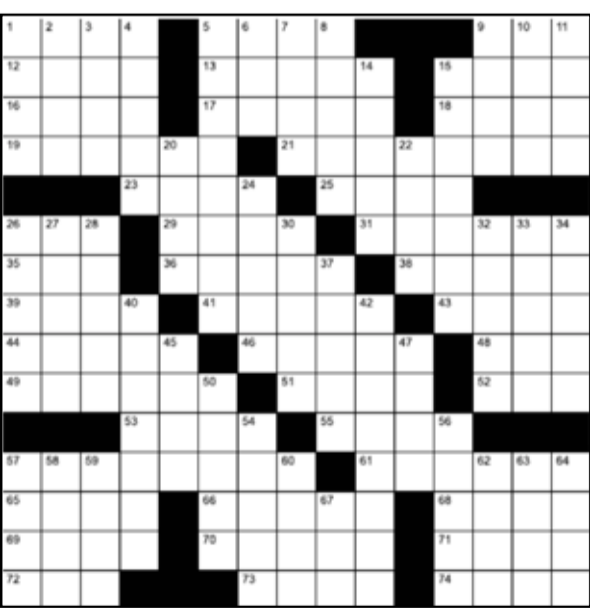
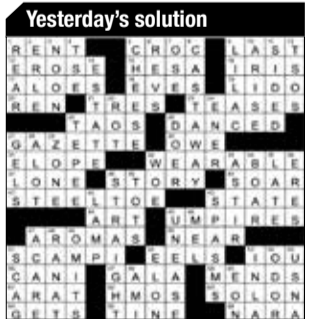
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	0	12	cloudy
Changchun	-11	-6	cloudy
Chengdu	7	15	cloudy
Chongqing	8	13	cloudy
Fuzhou	9	19	fine
Guangzhou	9	22	fine
Guiyang	6	13	overcast
Haikou	16	22	cloudy
Hangzhou	4	16	fine
Harbin	-13	-9	cloudy
Hefei	1	16	fine
Nanjing	2	14	fine
Shanghai	4	13	fine
Taipei	13	17	cloudy
Wuhan	1	18	fine
Hong Kong	18	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	0	1	snow
Frankfurt	-1	6	cloudy
Paris	2	7	cloudy
London	7	9	cloudy
New York	0	8	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Marine mammal, secure something; 5- Texas city on the Brazos; 9- Crumpets partner; 12- Pro ___; 13- Run away with a lover; 15- Turndowns; 16- Stepped; 17- Ventilated; 18- Makes mistakes; 19- Become visible; 21- Building; 23- Final Four org.; 25- Med. school course; 26- Monopoly quartet; Abbr.; 29- "Dancing Queen" quartet; 31- Foul-smelling; 35- I know what you're up to!; 36- Entreaties; 38- Entrap; 39- Actor Connery; 41- Spine-tingling; 43- Fed; 44- Throat bug; 46- Legal wrongs; 48- Salamander; 49- In and of ___; 51- Bottle part; 52- RR stop; 53- Sandwich shop; 55- Poor grades; 57- Coccyx; 61- Tantalizes; 65- Farm measure; 66- See eye to eye; 68- Pool division; 69- Meets one's maker; 70- ___ is human...; 71- ___ kleine Nachtmusik; 72- Show stoppers?; 73- Ike's ex; 74- Hit with an open hand;

DOWN 1- Mex. miss; 2- Lawman Wyatt; 3- On the peak of; 4- Burdened; 5- Suitable for wearing; 6- Ring king; 7- Apple throwaway; 8- Musical drama, usually sung in Italian; 9- Actress Spelling; 10- Architect Saarinen; 11- Org.; 14- Paradises; 15- Bedroom mosquito protection; 20- Put ___ on (limit); 22- Felines; 24- Red as ___; 26- Big name in vermouth; 27- Role for Clark; 28- Flies high; 30- Composer Copland; 32- Titles; 33- Kool-Aid maker; 34- Busybody; 37- Begat; 40- Teases; 42- And so forth; 45- Commoner; 47- ___-Ball (arcade game); 50- Rest on the surface of a liquid; 54- Gold bar; 56- Shops want to achieve high ones!; 57- I did it!; 58- Not base; 59- Angers; 60- ... saw Elba; 62- Travel on water; 63- Sicilian resort; 64- Leak slowly; 67- Sea eagle;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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DRIVE IN

ANGELINA JOLIE IS GRACEFUL AND SHARP AS OPERA STAR MARIA CALLAS IN 'MARIA'

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

ANGELINA Jolie glides through the final days of Maria Callas' short life in Pablo Larraín's "Maria," a dramatic, evocative elegy to the famed soprano. It's an affair that's at turns melancholy, biting and grandly theatrical, an aria for a once in a generation star.

Reality is of little consequence on the stage and in "Maria." It's all about the raw feeling, which serves the movie well, more dream than history lesson about La Callas. Early on, she pops some Mandrax and tells her devoted butler Ferruccio (a simply wonderful Pierfrancesco Favino) that a television crew is on the way. Are they real, he wonders.

"As of this morning, what is real and what is not real is my business," she says calmly and definitively, making a feast out of Steven Knight's sharp script. It's one of many great lines and moments for Jolie, whose intensity and resolve belie her fragile appearance.

In "Maria," we are the com-



Angelina Jolie as Maria Callas in a scene from "Maria" (Netflix)

panion to a protagonist with an ever-loosening grip on reality, walking with her through Paris, and her life, for one week in September 1977.

The images from cinematographer Ed Lachman, playfully shifting in form and style, take us on a scattershot journey through her triumphs on stage, her scandalous romance with Aristotle Onassis (Haluk Bilginer) and her traumatic youth. In the present, at age 53, she sleeps till midday,

drinks the minimal calories she ingests, goes to restaurants where the waiters know her name looking for adulation and has visions of performances staged just for her all around the city.

Callas is always immaculately dressed and assured, whether reflecting to the imagined news crew (led by Kodi Smit-McPhee) or attempting to find her voice again. Her instrument had famously diminished, leaving her wondering what's left to live for.

Larraín has made a lasting mark on cinema with his unofficial trilogy about these famous women with tragic narratives. With "Jackie," "Spencer" and now "Maria," his films are also an unintentional antidote to Ryan Murphy's stranglehold of the grand dames of recent history, which are all style and scandal and little substance. And yet Larraín's films are not for everyone.

Jolie as a movie star is somehow both omnipresent and

elusive, and lately she chooses to step in front of the camera all too infrequently. Perhaps it's because performances like Jolie's in "Maria" look so all-consuming.

Character and actor blend so seamlessly, so ferociously, that you leave not just with heightened empathy for La Callas but Jolie as well.

In one of the film's few regrettable scenes, she's put face to face with John F. Kennedy (no fault of Caspar Phillipson), whose wife has caught the greedy eye of Onassis. As a testament to the power of Jolie and the script, you almost forgive yet another JFK impersonation for giving her one of the great brushoffs to utter, romantic and withering all at once. Is it all a little much? Of course, but that's kind of the point of Maria.

"Maria," a Netflix release in select theaters now and streaming Dec. 11, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "a sexual reference, some language." Running time: 122 minutes.



AD

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tTUNES

The Breeders' Kim Deal soars on solo debut

WHEN the Pixies set out to make their 1988 debut studio album, they enlisted Steve Albini to engineer "Surfer Rosa," the seminal alternative record which includes the enduring hit, "Where Is My Mind?" That experience was mutually beneficial to both parties — and was the beginning of a decades-long friendship between the prickly Albini and Kim Deal, the band's bassist at the time.

Nearly 35 years later — and just before the acclaimed audio engineer died in May at age 61 — Deal turned to Albini once again for what would be their final collaboration, this time for another debut. Eight of the 11 tracks on Deal's first solo studio album, "Nobody Loves You More," were produced by both Albini and Deal — the ideal partnership of his experimentation and her musical skill.

Deal's music has always been a reflection of both the rugged exterior needed to be a woman at the forefront of the '90s alternative rock scene as well as a tenderness that subverts the indifference often characterizing that same scene.

Those features, ostensibly at odds with one another, culminate in "Nobody Loves You More," thanks to her poignant lyricism and the unique instrumentation woven throughout the record. At its heart, this is still a rock album — one that Deal is uniquely suited to make.

The album's final track, "A Good Time Pushed," musically and lyrically captures the fine line between doom and joy. "We're having a good time," she repeats, in what is perhaps an effort to convince herself that she is.

Although the continuity is there between this album and the music of the Pixies and Deal's band The Breeders, aspects of it are unequivocally distinct.

The resounding brass instruments on the title track and "Coast," along with the orchestra featured on "Summerland," are a departure from the traditional rock instrumentation that many listeners have come to associate with the 63-year-old.

As the album title suggests, much of the songs on "Nobody Loves You More" are also lyrically earnest and romantic. "Are you mine?/Are you my baby?/I have no mind/For nothin but love," Deal croons on the doo-wop-inspired "Are You Mine?"

There are anomalies — like in the drum- and synth-heavy "Big Ben Beat," which is evocative of rocker Kim Gordon's electronic pivot in 2024's "The Collective." That one was produced only by Deal, not Albini.

As a whole, "Nobody Loves You More" is varied — and as distinctly American as the myriad locations which inspired it, from the Massachusetts island of Nantucket (the breezy sounds of "Coast") to the Florida Keys ("Summerland") to Deal's hometown of Dayton, Ohio.

Fans of the Pixies and the Breeders will find a lot to enjoy here — it is both familiar and different. **KRYSTA FAURIA, MDT/AP**



"Nobody Loves You More" by Kim Deal (4AD Records)



Heaven for wine lovers

IRENE SAM, MDT

LAST week, "An Exquisite Night of World-Class Bordeaux Wines" took place at Wynn Macau, bringing in 24 top wineries from Bordeaux to Macao. The event involved the most prestigious wineries, including Château Mouton Rothschild, Château Brane Cantenac, Château Montrose, Château Cos d'Estournel, Château Lynch-Bages, Château Grand Puy Lacoste, Château Smith Haut Lafitte, Château Client and more. The extravagant event presented the best collections imported directly from Bordeaux, granting guests an opportunity to not only meet representatives, experts and owners from the 24 participating wineries but also learn about the profiles of the exquisite fine wines.

The two-day event offered an array of fascinating activities, including a Bordeaux Wine Masterclass, a Bordeaux Wine Gala Dinner curated by the outstanding culinary team, and a walkaround wine tasting. Additionally, wine

aficionados indulged in an exquisite Baron Philippe de Rothschild wine pairing lunch prepared by Executive Chef Henry Zhang of Drunken Fish, the brand-new seafood restaurant at Wynn Macau, featuring a selection of dishes that pair perfectly with horizontal Year of the Dragon vintage 2012 selection including Château Mouton Rothschild under the group.

Jennifer Docherty MW hosted the wine masterclass. She became the first Chinese-born and Chinese-speaking Master of Wine in the world in 2015. With extensive experience in the wine industry over the past 16 years, she was involved in the sourcing, selling and trading of fine wines for companies in the UK, Hong Kong and China. She is also an expert in Japanese sake and a judge for the International Wine Challenge Sake Competition held in London every year. In this masterclass, she shared her insights on a wide range of red and white Bordeaux wines and discuss two key topics in depth: "White Wine Excellence: A Deep Dive into

Bordeaux Blanc", an introduction to the style and variety of Bordeaux white wines; and "Climate Change through the Lens of Bordeaux Vintages", a deep dive into the impact of global warming in Bordeaux with reds.

Highlight came when Executive Chef Chan Tak Kwong of the two MICHELIN-starred Wing Lei Cantonese restaurant at Wynn Macau and Executive Chef Helder Sequeira Amaral of the Forbes Five-Star SW Steakhouse at Wynn Palace teamed up to present an exquisite menu paired with a variety of premium Bordeaux fine wines, including Baron de Brane Blanc 2023, Château Tronquoy Lalande 2014, Château Lynch-Bages 2010, Château Clinet 2015, and Château Coutet 2016, etc. Guests again had the opportunity to engage with representatives from Bordeaux wineries and explore the collection of magnums at the tasting counter featuring 18 renowned French Bordeaux fine wines — it was definitely a must-go for wine lovers.

OPINION

Business Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg



LUCKIN COFFEE IS JUST THE TIP OF STARBUCKS' CHINA WOES

As Starbucks Corp.'s new Chief Executive Officer Brian Niccol engineers a business turnaround, what to do with its operations in China must be on the top of his mind. The American coffee chain is exploring strategic options, including a possible stake sale.

China is becoming a drag. The country accounts for less than 10% of revenue, even though nearly 20% of its outlets are located there. In the September quarter, same-store sales tumbled 14% from a year earlier, even worse than the 6% decline in the US.

Much media focus has been on home-grown brand Luckin Coffee Inc., which has staged an amazing comeback after being delisted from the Nasdaq for accounting fraud in 2020. Luckin's 9.90 yuan (\$1.40) coffee is taking away business from Starbucks' basic drinks, just when the Chinese economy is weak and consumers are wary of spending.

But for Starbucks, Luckin is only the tip of the iceberg. The Chinese brand itself is drawn into a relentless price war with arch-rival Cotti Coffee. Serendipitously, Cotti was set up by Luckin's disgraced founders who were exiled after being embroiled in the accounting scandal. Mirroring Luckin's approach, the two-year-old startup is expanding rapidly, luring young coffee lovers with cheap brew. It already has 10,000 stores, more than Starbucks' 7,600.

Indeed, Luckin's financials are suffering, too. Same-store sales have been declining this year. Meanwhile, Cotti's management is showing no sign of slowing down. The company plans to operate 50,000 stores by 2025. In other words, the price war will continue.

For a big market still new to drinking coffee, penetration is key in China. The reason why Cotti — and to a lesser extent Luckin — can grow so quickly is that they rely heavily on the franchise model. Young people who don't want to brave the dismal job market are happy to set up Cotti Express, often bare-bone storefronts in shopping malls and subways, because the break-even point is so much lower. By comparison, Starbucks operates its own outlets, which slows down the speed of its store openings.

In recent months, Starbucks has been following in the footsteps of other global brands and venturing into smaller cities, where retail sales are more resilient and the penetration rate lower. But the verdict is still out on whether this strategy will pan out — in small towns, Starbucks' novelty can wear off quickly.

Meanwhile, Starbucks' most lucrative offerings — Frappuccino and cold, sugary refreshers that American teenagers love — are hitting the wall in China. The country's milk-tea chains can easily satisfy sugar cravings. Big names such as Chabaidao and Chagee are rolling out new concoctions weekly, offering exotic fruit and herbal tea blends with whipped cream on top.

Seen in this light, allowing in a local, more entrepreneurial partner is essential for Starbucks' survival in the world's second-largest economy. Besides, historically, capital markets have rewarded restaurant chains that are willing to spin off or sell non-core businesses. This is because for brands, franchising is more profitable, and a stake sale allows the company room for larger share buybacks.

Niccol plans to visit China in early December to better understand what's happening there. If he ends up selling the business, it's not a retreat. Starbucks, founded in the 1970s, needs to foster and monetize its brand rather than laboriously opening one physical store after another.

Courtesy Bloomberg/Shuli Ren

FOSSILIZED DINOSAUR FECES AND VOMIT HELP SCIENTISTS RECONSTRUCT THE CREATURES' RISE

THE BUZZ

Using fossilized feces and vomit samples from Poland, scientists have reconstructed how dinosaurs came to dominate the Earth millions of years ago.

Researchers aren't sure whether dinosaurs' rise over the course of 30 million years happened because of luck, skill, climate or some combination. But they came away knowing this: "It was not a sudden thing," said study co-author Martin Qvarnström from Uppsala University.

The new study, published Wednesday (yesterday, Macau time) in the journal Nature, analyzed hundreds of dino droppings to re-

construct who was eating whom 200 million years ago.

The first dinosaurs were go-getters, Qvarnström said, eating whatever they could — including insects, fish and plants.

When climate conditions changed, they were quick to adapt. Plant-eating dinosaurs, for example, ate a greater variety of greens than other vegetarians of the time, so it was easier to expand their palates when wetter conditions gave rise to new plant species.

Since the study's findings were limited to Polish fossils, Qvarnström said he'd like to see if their ideas hold steady against fossil records from around the world.

AP PHOTO



People watch floats being inflated in preparation for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, in NYC

MACY'S THANKSGIVING PARADE KICKS OFF A CENTURY AFTER ITS FIRST TRIP THROUGH MANHATTAN

A century after the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the annual holiday tradition kicks off today [Macau time] in New York City with new Spider-Man and Minnie Mouse balloons, zoo and pasta-themed floats, performances from Jennifer Hudson and Idina Menzel, and more.

This year's star-studded lineup is a far cry from the parade's initial incarnation, which featured floats showing scenes from Mother Goose, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Miss Muffet and the Spider, and other fairy tales.

Some things remain the same, though. As in 1924, there will be plenty of marching bands and lots of clowns, followed by the grand finale of Santa Claus riding through Manhattan and ushering in the holiday season.

This year's parade features 17 giant, helium-filled character balloons, 22 floats, 15 novelty and

heritage inflatables, 11 marching bands, 700 clowns, 10 performance groups, award-winning singers and actors, and the WNBA champion New York Liberty.

One new float will spotlight the Rao's food brand, featuring a knight and a dragon in battle made with actual pasta elements. Another will celebrate the Bronx Zoo's 125th anniversary with representations of a tiger, a giraffe, a zebra and a gorilla.

"The work that we do, the opportunity to impact millions of people and bring a bit of joy for a couple of hours on Thanksgiving morning, is what motivates us every day," said Will Coss, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade executive producer.

The parade begins at 8:30 a.m. on Manhattan's Upper West Side and ends 2.5 away around noon at Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street, which serves

as a stage and backdrop for performances.

It'll happen rain or shine — the parade has only been canceled three times, from 1942 to 1944 during World War II — but organizers will be monitoring wind speeds throughout the festivities to make sure it's safe for the big balloons to fly.

So far, the forecast calls for rain with temperatures in the upper-40s and winds around 10 mph, well within the acceptable range for letting Snoopy, Bluey and their friends soar. New York City law prohibits Macy's from flying the full-size balloons if sustained winds exceed 23 mph or wind gusts are over 35 mph.

The parade airs on NBC with hosts Savannah Guthrie, Hoda Kotb and Al Roker and streams on the network's Peacock service. Carlos Adyan and Andrea Meza will host a Spanish simulcast on Telemundo. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



United States Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg dined with President-elect Trump at Mar-a-Lago, discussing economic plans. Zuckerberg seeks improved ties with conservatives after Facebook's earlier Trump ban. The meeting follows Zuckerberg's criticism of alleged Biden-era censorship and increasing involvement of tech moguls in Trump's agenda.

AP PHOTO



United States GDP grew 2.8% in Q3 2024, driven by consumer spending and exports. Inflation slowed to 2.6%, aiding Federal Reserve rate cuts. President-elect Trump inherits a stable economy but plans tariff increases. Economic policies under his administration remain uncertain amid ongoing inflation concerns.

AP PHOTO



Bolivia Fuel shortages and rising prices grip Bolivia, sparking protests. Drivers face days-long gas station queues amid plummeting foreign reserves. Critics blame President Luis Arce's inaction. The crisis disrupts farming and commerce, worsening inflation. Public discontent mounts ahead of Bolivia's contentious 2025 elections.

AP PHOTO



United Kingdom The Labour government will review electric vehicle sales targets after Stellantis announced the closure of its Luton factory, risking 1,100 jobs. Automakers struggle with stringent zero-emission mandates requiring 22% EV sales in 2024, with fines for non-compliance. Industry seeks regulatory flexibility.