



New Year's card sheep completes knitting scarf

TOKYO (AP) — When millions of Japanese received their customary New Year's greeting cards this month, the sheep on the postage stamps had finished knitting the scarf it began 12 years ago. Tradition in Japan calls for people to send post cards — often hundreds of them — to friends, colleagues, and relatives, decked with pine trees, cranes, and other symbols of good luck to welcome the new year — but also showing the animal of the year, as set by the Asian zodiac. Although most stores and businesses were closed January 1, mail workers were hard at work making sure the cards were delivered. The sheep is the animal for 2015, heralding a year of harmony as well as possibly meekness, according to astrological storytelling. In 2003, the stamp on the cards issued by the post office had as its design a fluffy sheep busily knitting a scarf. This year, it's wearing the scarf, and holding the knitting needles, perhaps a little proudly. It is not clear what it plans to knit for 2027.



(AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

AirAsia Zest plane overshoots Philippine runway

KALIBO, Philippines (AP) — An AirAsia Zest plane carrying 159 people overshoot the runway and got stuck in a muddy field December 30 at an international airport in the central Philippines after flying from Manila in windy weather, officials said. There were no reports of injuries. Crew members launched emergency slides to help passengers disembark from the Airbus A320-200 after it skidded off the runway in the resort town of Kalibo in Aklan province before nightfall, Giovanni Hontomin, who is in charge of AirAsia Zest's operations, said by phone. Initial reports indicated that three of the plane's tires got stuck in the mud, said Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines spokesman Eric Apolonio. A tropical storm set off landslides and flash floods in the southern and central Philippines, leaving at least 31 people dead and seven missing, officials said. Kalibo town, 217 miles south of Manila, is a busy gateway to the Boracay beach resort, a popular tourist destination. The accident came after an AirAsia plane crashed into the Java Sea December 28 during a flight from Indonesia to Singapore with 162 people on board. Bloating bodies and debris were discovered floating in Indonesian waters December 30. It also came two days after another incident involving an AirAsia Zest plane, when a jet operated by the carrier developed a tire problem in the central Philippine city of Tagbilaran while its 184 passengers and crew were boarding, prompting the airline to cancel the flight to Manila, officials said. The Airbus A320 aircraft's tire was later fixed. No reason was given for the problem. Budget carrier AirAsia Zest is partly owned by AirAsia Philippines.

Three Chinese police arrested in female worker's death

BEIJING (AP) — State media say three Chinese police have been arrested in the beating death of a female construction worker who was attempting to receive her wages. The official Xinhua News Agency said one officer was accused of causing the death of the 47-year-old worker, Zhou Xiuyun. Two others were arrested for allegedly abusing their power. Xinhua said 10 workers were stopped by guards and police December 13 when they attempted to enter the construction site in northern Shanxi province to be paid. It said a brawl ensued in which police also broke Zhou's husband's ribs. A video of Zhou's struggle with police spread widely in China, with one segment showing a police officer appearing to stand on her hair as she lay unconscious on the ground.

Third blogger detained in Vietnam in a month

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Vietnamese police detained a third blogger in a month in the latest crackdown on dissent in the communist country. Blogger Nguyen Dinh Ngoc, 48, was taken into custody and his house was searched in the southern commercial hub of Ho Chi Minh City late last month. The Ministry of Public Security said in a statement that police were investigating and will deal with Ngoc in accordance with the law, but did not elaborate. Over the past month, police in Ho Chi Minh City detained two other bloggers for alleged anti-government postings. International human-rights groups and some western governments, including the U.S., have criticized Vietnam for arresting people for peacefully expressing their views. Hanoi says only lawbreakers are jailed.

China punishes hospital for operating room photos

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese health authorities put a hospital president on probation and fired three others following public outrage over photos posted online of smiling medical staff posing with patients during surgery. The photos were taken in August at Fengcheng Hospital in the north-central city of Xi'an and leaked on social media. Online commentators criticized medical staff for being unprofessional and disrespectful of patients, while others defended the photos, saying they were intended to be private and were taken at the end of surgical procedures. The Xi'an Bureau of Public Health, which handed out the punishment, said in a statement that the staff took the photos to memorialize the operating room, which was to be relocated. Nevertheless, the bureau said it requested everyone involved in the photo scandal to offer self-critiques. The bureau also put the hospital president on probation for one year and fired a deputy president, the head nurse, and the person in charge of anesthetics. Tensions have run high between health workers and patients in China. Patients often complain about poor medical services and high costs, especially the need to bribe doctors and nurses in exchange for competent services. Chinese health workers say they are overworked and underpaid.



FLYING INTO A RAGE. Cho Hyun-ah, center, who was head of cabin service at Korean Air and the oldest child of Korean Air chairman Cho Yang-ho, speaks to the media upon her arrival for questioning at the Aviation and Railway Accident Investigation Board office of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport in Seoul, South Korea. Nut rage imploded the career of the Korean Air Lines executive and embarrassed her family and country. Now South Korean retailers are experiencing the unexpected upside: a boom in sales of macadamias. The flavorful macadamia nut was unfamiliar to many South Koreans until Cho ordered a flight attendant off a December 5 flight from New York City after she was served them in a bag, instead of on a plate. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man, File)

Korean Air to be sanctioned for nut rage cover-up

By Youkyung Lee
AP Business Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's transport ministry says Korean Air Lines Co. faces sanctions for pressuring employees to lie during a government probe into the nut rage fiasco that highlighted the tyrannical behavior of a top Korean business family.

The ministry said it will also evaluate if the airline's corporate culture poses safety risks after its chairman's daughter, Cho Hyun-ah, overruled the captain of a flight to force the plane back to the gate.

Cho, who was head of cabin service at Korean Air, ordered a senior flight attendant off a December 5 flight after she was served macadamia nuts in a bag, instead of on a plate, in what she thought was a breach of service protocol in first class.

Transport ministry director Lee Gwang-hee said Korean Air could face 21 days of flight suspensions or a \$1.3 million fine for violating aviation law. The punishment will be determined by a separate committee that could decide to increase or lessen it.

Cho family members have a direct 10 percent stake in Korean Air, which is part of the family's Hanjin conglomerate.

Park Chang-jin, the crew member who had to disembark from the plane, told South Korea's KBS television network that Cho had shamed and insulted crew members. A first-class passenger told Yonhap News Agency that Cho yelled at flight attendants who kneeled before her, pushed one flight attendant's shoulder, and threw an object at the cabin wall.

The incident now dubbed "nut rage" hogged headlines around the world and enraged the

South Korean public, leading to Cho's removal from all executive roles at the airline.

The 40-year-old and her father apologized, but a new furor has erupted over Korean Air's attempt to foil government investigators. Local media reports also exposed how Korean Air employees were treated like servants of the Cho family.

"If the incident itself were not beastly enough, Korean Air's response has been abominable," *Korea Herald* said in an editorial. "In attempts that are akin to feudal servants trying to protect their lord's daughter, Korean Air staff rallied to the rescue of Korean Air CEO Cho Yang-ho's daughter."

Park, the crew member, was visited by Korean Air Lines officials who pressured him to give a sanitized version of events to investigators.

The airline will be punished because Cho and Park lied during the probe and because the captain was negligent in his duties, according to the ministry.

However, the captain won't face any sanction as he was powerless to refuse a member of the family that controls the airline, said Lee, the transport official.

The ministry's statement indicated other airline employees also faced pressure to lie to the investigators. It did not identify them.

Its investigation found Cho used abusive language with the flight attendants but could not ascertain if she used violence. It will file a complaint against Cho with prosecutors later in the day.

Prosecutors earlier launched a separate investigation into the Korean Air case after receiving a complaint from a civic group. Prosecutors summoned Cho to be questioned,

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Fijian Dollar	1.9891
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7554
Indian Rupee	63.295
Indonesian Rupiah	12545
Iranian Rial	27073
Japanese Yen	120.59
Laos New Kip	8099.1
Malaysian Ringgit	3.5165
Nepal Rupee	101.15
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