



China to lift price controls on most drugs starting June 1

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese regulators will lift price controls on most pharmaceutical drugs starting June 1 in hopes the market-driven pricing system will keep medical costs in check, the National Development and Reform Commission announced recently. Beijing vowed to ease government controls in favor of market competition in as many areas as possible to improve efficiency, and experts say the upper-limit drug prices set by the government have become irrelevant because market prices are typically much lower. “The new policy is merely a symbolic move,” said Shi Lichen, a Beijing-based medical services consultant. The country’s most powerful regulating agency said on its official website that it would abandon the decades-long practice of price controls, except for narcotics and some psychiatric drugs, as part of drug-price reform. Chinese consumers have long complained of high drug costs. Authorities have in the last couple of years cracked down on rampant bribery by pharmaceutical companies which had inflated drug prices.

Filipinos urged to turn off appliances during Pacquiao fight

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — An officer at a Philippine electric company urged customers to turn off major appliances to help prevent outages plaguing his province so people could watch the fight between Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr. earlier this month. Palawan Electric Cooperative secretary Rante Ramos said shutting down refrigerators in 15,000 households alone reduced the demand for electricity in the province enough to compensate for the power deficit of about 2 megawatts when the fight was aired in the Philippines. He said air conditioners, washing machines, and electric pots also consume a lot of electricity. He was quoted as saying, “If it is just for the Pacquiao fight, let us just leave electric fans and TVs on.” Unfortunately, sadness and disappointment gripped Filipinos after Pacquiao’s defeat in the much-anticipated fight. Some fans believe Pacquiao should retire from boxing while others have demanded a rematch.

Indonesian police arrest seven in seafood slavery case

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Lt. Col. Arie Dharmanto, Indonesia’s National Police anti-trafficking unit chief, said two Indonesians and five Thai nationals have been arrested and accused of human trafficking connected with slavery in the seafood industry. Dharmanto said the arrests were made in the remote island village of Benjina. Five Thai boat captains and two Indonesian employees at Pusaska Benjina Resources, one of the largest fishing firms in eastern Indonesia, were taken into custody. The arrests came after The Associated Press earlier this year reported on slave-caught seafood shipped from Benjina to Thailand, where it can be exported and enter the supply chains of some of America’s biggest food retailers. If prosecuted, the men face jail sentences of up to 15 years and fines as high as \$46,000.

Thailand vows crackdown on human traffickers

HAT YAI, Thailand (AP) — Thai authorities have arrested three local officials they allege were involved in trafficking and holding Rohingya Muslims for ransom at a jungle camp where 26 bodies were found in the mountains of southern Thailand. National police chief Gen. Somyot Poompanmoung said the suspects — two deputy village chiefs and a municipal councillor — were believed to be part of a “transnational crime network” that included people from Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia and in operation for three or four years. The Rohingya Muslims are a long-persecuted religious minority in neighboring Myanmar.

Retiring Hong Kong police chief takes pot shot at protesters

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong’s outgoing police chief took a parting shot at pro-democracy protesters who occupied busy streets in parts of the southern Chinese financial center for nearly three months last year. Retiring police commissioner Tsang Wai-hung did not refer directly to the pro-democracy activists, or to other groups that have led unruly demonstrations since then over grievances such as the growing influx of mainland Chinese shoppers, though there was little doubt whom he was talking about. “Now, because of increasing radicalization of protests, we have seen an increasing sense of lawlessness with protesters blatantly disregarding the law,” Tsang told reporters. “This is not going to be good for Hong Kong. This is not going to be good for law and order,” he said, urging people to adhere to the law if they want to “fight for their political beliefs.” Tsang, known for taking a tough stance, has been criticized over the police force’s handling of the “Occupy Central” protests. The protests spiraled into chaos during the last weekend in September, when officers arrested student leaders and later fired dozens of rounds of tear gas at the demonstrators. The former British colony’s police force was known as one of the best in Asia, but its reputation took a battering over heavy-handed tactics.

Man in China stands trial for opening door of taxiing plane

BEIJING (AP) — Authorities say passengers in China have opened airplane emergency doors without authorization 12 times this year during taxiing or while at a standstill, and one of the passengers has been put on trial in the country’s first such legal case. The Civil Aviation Administration of China said the man, identified only by his family name of Piao, is standing trial on a charge of endangering public safety. The agency says he opened an emergency door on an Asiana Airlines flight without authorization on February 12 when the plane was taxiing, prompting the flight crew to take emergency measures to halt the flight. With its growing middle class, China is seeing record numbers of air travellers, many of them flying for the first time.



SEISMIC SUFFERING. USAID rescue workers inspect the site of collapsed buildings after an earthquake in Kathmandu, Nepal. A new earthquake that hit May 12 spread more fear and misery in Nepal, which is still struggling to recover from the devastating April 25 quake that left thousands dead. (AP Photo/Bikram Rai)

Another deadly earthquake spreads fear and misery in Nepal

By Binaj Gurubacharya and Katy Daigle
The Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — A new earthquake killed dozens of people May 12 and spread more fear and misery in Nepal, which is still struggling to recover from a devastating quake on April 25 that left more than 8,000 dead.

The magnitude-7.3 quake, centered midway between Kathmandu and Mount Everest, struck hardest in the foothills of the Himalayas, triggering some landslides, but it also shook the capital badly, sending thousands of terrified people into the streets.

Nepal’s parliament was in session when the quake hit, and frightened lawmakers ran for the exits as the building shook and the lights flickered out.

At least 110 people were killed in the quake and more than 2,300 were injured, according to the Home Ministry. The death toll rose when people in isolated Himalayan towns and villages were found buried under rubble, according to the U.N.’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Tremors radiated across parts of Asia. In neighboring India, at least 16 people were confirmed dead after rooftops or walls collapsed onto them, according to India’s Home Ministry. Chinese media reported at least one death in Tibet.

The magnitude-7.8 earthquake that hit April 25 killed more than 8,150 and flattened entire villages, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless in the country’s worst-recorded quake since 1934. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) said the new earthquake was the largest aftershock to date of that destructive quake.

The temblor was deeper, however, coming

from a depth of 11.5 miles versus the earlier one at 9.3 miles. Shallow earthquakes tend to cause more damage.

Rescue helicopters were sent to mountain districts where landslides and collapsed buildings buried people, the government said. Home Ministry official Laxmi Dhakal said the Sindhupalchowk and Dolkha districts were the worst hit.

Search parties fanned out to look for survivors in the wreckage of collapsed buildings in Sindhupalchowk’s town of Chautara, which had become a hub for humanitarian aid after last month’s quake.

Impoverished Nepal appealed for billions of dollars in aid from foreign nations, as well as medical experts to treat the wounded and helicopters to ferry food and temporary shelters to hundreds of thousands left homeless amid unseasonal rains.


The May 12 quake was followed closely by at least 10 strong aftershocks, according to the USGS.

Early reports indicated at least two buildings had collapsed in Kathmandu, though at least one had been unoccupied due to damage it sustained on April 25. Experts say the earlier quake caused extensive structural damage even in buildings that did not topple, and that many were in danger of collapsing.

Frightened residents in the capital, who had returned to their homes only a few days earlier, once again set up tents and planned to sleep in empty fields, parking lots, and on sidewalks.

“Everyone was saying the earthquakes are over. ... Now I don’t want to believe anyone,” said 40-year-old produce vendor Ram Hari Sah as he searched for a spot to pitch the orange tarpaulin to shelter his family. “We are all

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 5/15

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Cambodian Riel	4040.1
China Renminbi	6.2065
Fijian Dollar	2.0072
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7509
Indian Rupee	63.516
Indonesian Rupiah	13084
Iranian Rial	27993
Japanese Yen	119.86
Laos New Kip	8078.3
Malaysian Ringgit	3.5645
Nepal Rupee	101.76
Pakistani Rupee	102.63
Papua N.G. Kina	2.6914
Philippine Peso	44.465
Russian Ruble	50.038
Saudi Riyal	3.7502
Singapore Dollar	1.3265
South Korean Won	1085.7
Sri Lankan Rupee	133.6
Taiwan Dollar	30.449
Thai Baht	33.6
Vietnam Dong	21765