



### Hackers crash Japan PM's website to protest whale hunt

TOKYO (AP) — A hacking group says it crashed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's official website to protest Japan's plans to hunt whales. Chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that one of Abe's websites became inaccessible during the early morning while police investigated. The site was restored by the evening. Suga acknowledged that the Anonymous hacker group posted a Twitter message claiming responsibility, but added authorities had not singled out the group as a prime suspect. One of the group's twitter messages criticized Japan over its whaling plans. The group also retweeted anti-whaling messages and one urging Abe not to eat whale meat and go vegan. The incident on Abe's site is the latest in a series of recent attacks on Japanese websites. The group claims responsibility for dozens of earlier attacks. The group most likely chose Abe's site "to get public attention and spread their message against dolphin and whale hunts, rather than causing real damage," said Nobuhiro Tsuji, a cybersecurity expert at Softbank Technology Corp. "They think bringing down the prime minister's website could cause an impact." Japan, despite protests from anti-whaling groups, resumed its annual Antarctic whale hunt, which it says is done for research, under a revised plan after the International Court of Justice found its earlier program unscientific.

### Ten Cambodians die after eating dog meat, drinking wine

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodian health officials were sent to a northeastern district where 10 people died and more than 100 were sickened in two separate incidents linked to the consumption of dog meat and rice wine, according to a medical officer. Kratie provincial health department chief Chhneang Sivutha said experts from the U.N.'s World Health Organization were also investigating the incidents, both in Snuol district. He said people in the province have been warned not to eat the meat of animals that died from illness or poisoning, and not to drink any wine that has not been properly inspected. Six people died after eating the barbecued carcass of a dog that died of unknown reasons. Four others died after drinking rice wine. Chhneang Sivutha said samples of the dog meat and wine were collected and sent to the Health Ministry in the capital, Phnom Penh, for laboratory testing. He said in a telephone interview that poisoning cases are not unusual, but it's rare to have so many victims at the same time. Food safety is not a priority in Cambodia, one of Asia's poorest countries. The country has also grappled with bird flu, with 56 confirmed cases of human infections since 2003, 37 of them fatal. Rice wine is particularly popular in rural areas, where it is cheap and usually infused with fruits or plants believed to have medicinal value.

### Firefighters spray wrong plane with foam at Chinese airport

BEIJING (AP) — When crew members of a passenger plane reported sparks coming from an engine while taxiing at an airport in southern China, eight fire trucks responded within minutes. Then they covered the wrong plane with white foam. The mistake at the Fuzhou city airport was quickly amended and the firefighters turned their attention to the correct plane, but the other one — with passengers aboard — was delayed 10 hours and the entire incident delayed 30 flights, the airport said in a statement. The Air China flight reported the problems in a right-side engine of a Boeing 737-800 for a flight headed to Beijing. By the time firefighters arrived four minutes later, engines were switched off. However, a Fuzhou Airlines plane of the same make had exhaust fumes coming from its tail. The firefighters sprayed the Fuzhou Airlines plane with foam until the airport's control center alerted them to the mistake, and then they sprayed the correct plane, the airport said. Fuzhou Airlines said its plane was covered with white foam and had to be towed away to check its engines. It took off about 10 hours later. The airport apologized for the inconvenience.

### Alibaba buys HK's South China Morning Post newspaper

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba says it is buying Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*. Alibaba Group says it signed a deal with publisher SCMP Group to buy the *Post* and the company's other media assets, which include magazines, outdoor advertising, and digital media, for 2.06 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$266 million). The newspaper said in a story on its website that the purchase price is not being disclosed. It is the latest media-related acquisition for Alibaba and gives control of Hong Kong's most prominent English-language publication to a mainland Chinese company. The deal is part of Alibaba's strategy of diversifying away from its core internet shopping business by tapping rising demand for online content from Chinese consumers.

### U.S. donates vehicles to poorly-armed Philippine forces

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The U.S. government has turned over to the Philippines the first of more than 100 armored personnel carriers (APCs) to boost its Southeast Asian ally's poorly equipped military, according to officials. The U.S. Embassy said the APCs are being given at no cost following a request by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The Philippines and the U.S. are defense treaty allies, and such grants are under the U.S. Excess Defense Article Program that allows the transfer of U.S. military equipment for free to qualified allies. The first 77 vehicles arrived in Subic Bay, a former U.S. Navy base. In November, the Philippines received two South-Korea-made fighter jets — the country's first supersonic combat aircraft in a decade — as it strengthens its underfunded military amid an escalating territorial feud with China and long-running Muslim and communist insurgencies.



**PACHYDERM PAMPERING.** Two elderly elephants that are part of the Mondulkiri Project in Mondulkiri province in eastern Cambodia are seen in this June 2015 file photo. The Mondulkiri Project aims to act as a sanctuary for elephants that previously worked for timber companies or as attractions in the tourist hub of Siem Reap. The project also seeks to give the local indigenous population jobs and curtail logging in the area. (Kristi Eaton via AP, File)

## Elephants get love and care in Cambodia, with the help of tourists

By Kristi Eaton  
The Associated Press

**S**EN MORONOM, Cambodia — The trip to the hills of eastern Cambodia had all the makings of a luxurious getaway: delicious fresh fruit fed by hand, a dip in a refreshingly cold watering hole, and a relaxing massage.

But I wasn't receiving these amenities. Elderly elephants were. And I was one of several tourists paying for the privilege of doting on them.

At the Mondulkiri Project, it's not the people who call the shots, but the elephants. Visitors from all over the world travel to Cambodia for a chance to interact with the behemoth creatures by washing them, feeding them, playing with them, and, of course, getting selfies with them. One thing that doesn't happen: riding on the animals' backs.

Named for Cambodia's most sparsely populated province, the Mondulkiri Project aims to act as a sanctuary for elephants that previously worked for timber companies or as attractions in the tourist hub of Siem Reap, home to the Angkor Wat site. The project also seeks to give the local indigenous population, called the Bunong, opportunities for jobs and help in curtailing logging and promoting forest conservation.

The Mondulkiri Project began in 2013, founded by the Tree family, who are not members of the Bunong community, but who support the Bunongs with revenue from the

project. The Tree family offers trekking along with the elephant experiences, and they run Tree Lodge, a bare-bones but comfortable set of bungalows with magnificent views of the Cambodian countryside.

During my stay, I joined several other tourists, both solo and group travellers, in cleaning and feeding the elephants. We also got an in-depth explanation of the project, its goals, and why preserving the area is important.

Then came the fun part: getting up close and personal with the gigantic mammals. The elephants spend all their time in a protected area of the forest, with local guides watching over them. The elephants were friendly, hungry, and eager to interact with us.

For the humans, there was a lunch of rice, vegetables, meat, and iced coffee. Then an English-speaking Bunong guide led us on an easy trek through the lush jungles as we headed to a chilly watering hole to wash one of the creatures.

More photo opportunity than actual cleansing, the elephant seemed to enjoy getting his back scratched and didn't mind the picture-taking. We all had the same post-cleansing goal anyway: a nap.

Mondulkiri province is located about five hours by minivan from Cambodia's capital of Phnom Penh and about 10 hours by minivan from Siem Reap. To learn more, visit <[www.mondulkiriproject.org](http://www.mondulkiriproject.org)> or <[www.elephantvalleyproject.org](http://www.elephantvalleyproject.org)>.

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 12/18

Bangladesh Taka	79.45
Cambodian Riel	4047.1
China Renminbi	6.4811
Fijian Dollar	2.1222
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7523
Indian Rupee	66.404
Indonesian Rupiah	13918
Iranian Rial	29980
Japanese Yen	121.44
Laos New Kip	8161.2
Malaysian Ringgit	4.2858
Nepal Rupee	106.27
Pakistani Rupee	104.71
Papua N.G. Kina	2.9895
Philippine Peso	47.347
Russian Ruble	71.105
Saudi Riyal	3.7544
Singapore Dollar	1.4129
South Korean Won	1183.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	143.7
Taiwan Dollar	32.938
Thai Baht	36.14
Vietnam Dong	22532