

## Tokyo zoo to work on changing living conditions for elephant

By Yuri Kageyama  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — A Tokyo zoo says it will work on improving living conditions for its 69-year-old elephant after an animal-welfare expert recommended simple additions such as infrared heaters and new toys instead of moving her to a sanctuary.

“The zoo has done a lot of good,” said Carol Buckley, who was invited to the zoo by the “Help Hanako” campaign that sought to improve the elephant’s situation or move it to a Thai sanctuary.

Hanako was among the healthiest elephants, for her age, she has ever seen, she added. Their usual lifespan is about 70 years.

Inokashira Park Zoo has said moving Hanako would be too stressful. A gift from Thailand in 1949, Hanako, or “flower child,” has lived in a zoo since she was two years old.

Buckley said Hanako is happy and loves her zookeepers. Instead of moving her, Buckley recommends infrared heaters and rubber mats to make her small concrete pen more livable. She suggested playing music and adding more toys, such as frozen fruit inside a tire. Tires and a tube are Hanako’s favorite toys now.

Buckley, an American who founded an animal sanctuary and has worked with other captive elephants, said renovating or enlarging Hanako’s pen would require noisy construction that might stress the animal. And introducing other elephants and even foliage could bewilder Hanako.



**ELDERLY ELEPHANT ENRICHMENT.** A woman waves to Hanako the elephant at Inokashira Park Zoo on the outskirts of Tokyo, in this photo taken on January 27, 2016. The zoo said it will work on improving living conditions for the 69-year-old elephant after an animal-welfare expert recommended against moving her. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko, File)

Zoo curator Hidemasa Hori, who met with Buckley during her visit, said the zoo will work on making the “environmental enrichment” changes, although some bureaucratic procedures would be required. The city of Tokyo runs the zoo.

Ulara Nakagawa, whose blog inspired the campaign, says funds can be raised to help make changes for Hanako.

It was unclear whether those who were behind the petition drive to move Hanako out of the zoo would be convinced by Buckley’s findings.

Buckley noted animal activists need to be educated, regardless of their good intentions.

“You think she should be put on a plane or a boat and go to Thailand? What are you thinking?” she said.

Buckley noted Hanako was clearly

bored and needs more toys as well as more time with the zookeepers.

“When her keepers let her in the barn, she just lit up. Her eyes got big, and her body relaxed, and she came in and her ears were flapping,” she said. “She came right over to the bars where they were and solicited their petting the entire time and didn’t stop talking.”

Hori said the zoo was open to Buckley’s ideas. He was happy the meeting had not been confrontational and was hopeful some of the easier changes might be completed soon.

“They agreed Hanako should not be moved,” he said in a telephone interview, acknowledging that perhaps the zookeepers had too readily assumed Hanako did not want change. “This is just a beginning.”



**POPULAR POE PREVAILS.** Philippine presidential candidate senator Grace Poe is greeted by supporters after addressing a rally to mark International Women’s Day, on March 8, 2016 in Manila, the Philippines. The Philippine Supreme Court has ruled that Poe is eligible to run for president in May 9 elections, overturning an elections commission decision to disqualify her and removing a long-hanging legal question over a tightly fought race to lead the Southeast Asian nation. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

## Court rules Philippine senator Grace Poe can run for president

By Jim Gomez  
The Associated Press

**M**ANILA, The Philippines — The Philippine Supreme Court has ruled that senator Grace Poe can run for president in May 9 elections, overturning an elections commission decision to disqualify her and removing a long-hanging legal question over a tightly fought race to lead the Southeast Asian nation.

The justices voted 9-6 to favor Poe’s petitions against the Commission on Elections decision last December to disqualify her on the grounds that she was not a natural-born citizen and did not have the required 10-year Philippine residency required of presidential candidates, said Supreme Court spokesman Theodore Te.

The decision can be appealed, according to Te.

The decision will provide a major boost to the campaign of Poe, who has already been leading in popularity polls, and removes a legal question over what has been shaping into a closely contested four-way race to succeed President Benigno Aquino III, whose six-year term ends June 30.

“This victory isn’t only mine,” a triumphant Poe told hundreds of people, who joined an International Women’s Day rally by a left-wing group in a Manila square. “This is a victory for all of us.”

Poe, 47, has seen her popularity soar since she first ran for office three years ago. She is the adopted daughter of one of the country’s most famous movie couples. Her late father mostly played roles as a defender of the downtrodden in a country still plagued by widespread poverty and corruption.

But the Commission on Elections ruled in December that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino as required by the constitution because she was abandoned as a baby by her unknown parents at a Roman Catholic church.

The U.S.-educated Poe, who renounced her Philippine citizenship for about five years to live with her family in America, also lacked the required 10-year Philippine residency ahead of the vote, the commission said. That prompted Poe to bring her case to the Supreme Court, which she asked to thrash her disqualification.

## Prince Harry visiting Nepal, touring quake-hit areas

By Binaj Gurubacharya  
The Associated Press

**K**ATHMANDU, Nepal — Ordinary people hope Britain’s Prince Harry’s visit to Nepal and tour of earthquake-hit areas draws attention to the country’s struggle to recover from last year’s disaster. Rebuilding is slow and tens of thousands remain homeless.

“Hopefully when a big prince comes to these alleys and the world’s media will see how miserable our lives are, we will get some help,” said Ram Kaji, who was selling potatoes on the street near his damaged home in Patan, a historic district near the capital of Kathmandu.

The April 25, 2015 quake killed nearly 9,000 people, destroyed about 1 million homes, and damaged many old temples, palaces, and other old structures in Patan and the capital.

During his five-day trip, the 31-year-old prince is visiting a camp for displaced survivors and staying with a

By Wasbir Hussain  
The Associated Press

**G**AUHATI, India — Citizens in Bhutan are anxious to ensure the survival of groves of trees that have been planted across the Himalayan nation to honor the beloved king and queen’s new baby boy.

Many people in the Buddhist country stop during daily walks or drives to water some of the 108,000 saplings placed on hillsides and in valleys. In Buddhism, trees are considered divine for their role in providing and nourishing all life forms.

“We are now nurturing the plants as if we are nurturing the little prince,” said Dasho Karma Raydi, who is among those helping to care for the new trees. “We are committed to take care of the plants because so much emotion is attached to this unique way of celebrating the new arrival.”

Raydi, who heads a government-run company, had driven his car to a small hill near a huge Buddha statue on the outskirts of the capital, Thimphu, to water a pine he planted in mid-March. He said he saw dozens of others

family whose men served in the famed Gurkha regiments in the British army — units that Harry served with in Afghanistan.

“He has a huge amount of admiration for the resilience of the people of the country, particularly in response to the earthquakes last year,” Kensington Palace said in a statement.

Harry is the first British royal to visit the Himalayan country since the monarchy was abolished in 2008 following street protests. Since then, Nepal has turned into a republic, with a president chosen by a parliament. The prince is scheduled to meet with President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

Authorities, however, have been slow to push ahead with rebuilding efforts. A government reconstruction agency was finally appointed in December but has yet to provide promised aid money to displaced families or guidelines to build new houses and structures.

People who live around the shiny Golden Temple in



**ROYAL TRIBUTE.** Bhutanese people are seen planting saplings on a hillside in Thimphu, Bhutan. Citizens in Bhutan are anxious to ensure the survival of groves of trees recently planted across the Himalayan nation to honor the beloved king and queen’s new baby boy. (Tendrel Initiatives via AP)

doing the same.

Prime Minister Tsering Tobgay joined tens of thousands of volunteers in planting the trees to honor the newest member of the royal family, who was born a month ago. King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and Queen Jetsun Pema are wildly popular in the nation of 800,000.

In Buddhism, trees are symbols of longevity, health, beauty, and compassion. The number of saplings was also symbolic, as Buddhists believe each person is required to overcome 108 defilements in order to achieve enlightenment.

“The trees will serve as a constant reminder to all of us about the importance of the Wangchuck Dynasty,” said Tenzin Lekphell, the head of a private company that organized the tree planting.

The species of trees planted range from teak to oak, and dogwood to pine, depending on the altitude at which they were planted, Lekphell said.

Bhutan prizes environmental initiatives highly, enshrining conservation in a constitution that also declares that 60 percent of the country must always be under forest cover.

“Tree planting is a part of Bhutanese culture. His Majesty the King also loves planting. He, too, may have planted saplings inside the palace complex,” said palace secretariat official Kunzang Wangdi.

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