



## Bornean orangutan now critically endangered

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A global conservation group says Borneo's orangutans are now a critically endangered species due to hunting and destruction of forest habitat. The assessment for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species was carried out earlier this year and published in early July. Previously the species was considered to be endangered. Orangutans only live in the wild in Borneo and Sumatra. The Sumatran orangutan has been critically endangered since 2008. IUCN estimates the number of Bornean orangutans has dropped nearly two-thirds since the early 1970s and will further decline to 47,000 animals by 2025. It says deforestation has dramatically shrunk the primate's habitat. On top of that, IUCN estimates between 2,000 and 3,000 have been killed by poachers every year for the past four decades.

## Malaysia cuts interest rate for first time in seven years

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's central bank has cut interest rates for the first time in seven years to bolster a slowing economy amid fears of greater volatility in global growth following Britain's decision to leave the European Union. Malaysia joins other countries in the region such as Indonesia and Singapore that have reduced interest rates this year. Bank Negara Malaysia said it decided to reduce its overnight policy rate, used by banks to calculate interest rates, to 3.0 percent from 3.25 percent. It warned of "increased downside risks" to global growth and said the rate cut would ensure that the economy remains on a "steady growth path." Malaysia's economy is expected to slow to between 4.0 and 4.5 percent this year, down from 5.0 percent in 2015.

## Amnesty International calls on Vietnam to end torture

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Amnesty International has called on Vietnam to end what it says is torture and ill treatment against prisoners of conscience. In a recent report, the human-rights group said prisoners of conscience undergo prolonged periods of solitary confinement, endure beatings, and are denied medical treatment. The report was based on a year of research, including interviews with 18 former prisoners of conscience. Five of the prisoners told Amnesty International they spend lengthy periods of time in solitary confinement in dark cells without access to fresh air, clean water, and sanitation. The report said some were frequently beaten. Vietnam says there are no political prisoners in the communist country.

## China, EU agree to steel working group amid dumping

BEIJING (AP) — European Union (EU) leaders say they have agreed with China to form a working group to discuss Beijing's overproduction of steel, which they say is linked to whether they will grant market economy status to China. European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker told reporters that there is a clear link between steel overcapacity in China and market economy status for China. He said he had agreed with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to establish "a kind of steel platform between China and the European Union to keep alive the debates and the discussions we have related to the steel overproduction." Juncker was in Beijing to attend a two-day summit. European steelmakers accuse China of dumping steel on the world market. Market status would mean more Chinese imports.

## Soyuz capsule docks with the International Space Station

MOSCOW (AP) — A Soyuz space capsule carrying astronauts from Russia, Japan, and the United States has docked with the International Space Station after a two-day voyage. The docking took place smoothly at a height of 254 miles above the earth. The capsule is carrying Russian commander Anatoly Ivanishin, NASA's Kathleen Rubins, and Takuya Onishi of the Japanese space agency JAXA. They join American Jeff Williams and Russians Oleg Skripochka and Alexey Ovchinin. The capsule blasted off from Russia's manned space complex in Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

## Philippines is only Asian country with rising teen pregnancy

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The Philippines is the only Asia-Pacific country where the rate of teen pregnancies rose over the last two decades and the slow decline of its overall fertility rate may deprive the country of the faster economic growth expected in places that have more working-age people than younger and older dependents, according to the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA). Girls between 15 and 19 years old make up 10 percent of the country's population of 100 million and one out of 10 of them have already given birth, UNFPA country representative Klaus Beck said. The fertility rate in that age group is 57 births for every 1,000 girls as of 2013 — higher than rates found by surveys every five years from 1998. He emphasized the urgency of fully implementing a reproductive health law, investing in quality education and health services for teenage girls, and increasing jobs for youth. The cost of not finishing high school over the lifetime of young people would be equivalent to about one percent of the country's gross domestic product, he added. The study supported by UNFPA found that "due to the slow reduction in the fertility rate the country may not be able to benefit fully from the demographic dividend," or the balance of its population among children, working-age adults (age 15 to 65), and elderly. It said the window of time to reap economic benefits from the favorable demographics was closing fast. The total fertility rate in the Philippines was three births per woman as of 2013, falling at a slow pace of 1.6 percent per year from seven births per woman in 1960. But the poorest quintile of the population has a higher fertility rate of 5.2 births per woman as of 2013.



**RAPPER'S WRATH.** Indian rapper Sofia Ashraf demonstrates her skills in Mumbai, India. The South Indian rapper is targeting Dow Chemical with rhymes — demanding the U.S. company pay more in compensation to victims and for environmental damage stemming from a horrific chemical gas leak that killed thousands of people and sickened countless others. (AP Photo/Rajanish Kakade)

## Indian rapper targets U.S. chemical giant in bid for damages

By **Nirmala George**  
The Associated Press

**N**EW DELHI — A South Indian rapper is targeting Dow Chemical with rhymes — demanding the U.S. company pay more in compensation to victims and for environmental damage stemming from a horrific chemical gas leak that killed thousands of people and sickened countless others.

Sofia Ashraf debuted "Dow vs. Bhopal: A Toxic Rap Battle" in June, calling the story of what happened in the central Indian city of Bhopal "a critical message to get out there."

The 1984 tragedy, considered the world's worst industrial accident, was caused by 40 tons of deadly methyl isocyanate gas leaking from a pesticide plant run by Union Carbide Corp. — later purchased by Dow Chemical. The leak killed more than 15,000 and sickened at least a half-million more. Activists say thousands of children have since been born with brain damage, missing palates, and twisted limbs.

Union Carbide paid \$470 million in a 1989 deal reached with the Indian government, which Dow has said takes care of its liability. But activists say the sum was far too low and ignored the need to clean up the environment.

"Speak to young people, and they know about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they know about the Holocaust," the 29-year-old songstress said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "But very few of them will know about the Bhopal gas leak tragedy."

Her video, she hopes, will change that, with its provocative clips of dancers wearing gas

masks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi orating, President Barack Obama donning sunglasses, and presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump doused in water interspersed with images of hospital rooms and Ashraf herself rapping angrily at the camera.

"This ain't road kill, death's still taking its toll," she raps over a driving bass beat. "There's water, water everywhere / corroding our copperware / It's so polluted, quit deluding."

This isn't the first time the Chennai-based artist has used rhymes to call on multinationals to act.

Her 2015 rap video "Kodaikanal Won't" took aim at Unilever, calling on the company to help former workers at a thermometer plant in the Tamil Nadu hill resort of Kodaikanal. Unilever's Indian subsidiary closed the plant 15 years ago after mercury contamination was discovered.

Earlier this year, the company reached a settlement agreement with the 591 former workers it had employed. Exact terms were not released, but the company disputes claims that the health of workers was affected by exposure to mercury.

Ashraf has gone after Dow Chemicals before for the Bhopal disaster.

Her 2008 song called "Don't Work For Dow" urged engineering students to ignore company recruiters on college campuses.

The latest song takes the Indian complaint abroad — urging the U.S. government to force Dow to offer more in compensation and clean up.

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 7/16

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Bangladesh Taka   | 78.375 |
| Cambodian Riel    | 4097.4 |
| China Renminbi    | 6.6935 |
| Fijian Dollar     | 2.0521 |
| Hong Kong Dollar  | 7.7541 |
| Indian Rupee      | 67.071 |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 13096  |
| Iranian Rial      | 30589  |
| Japanese Yen      | 104.88 |
| Laos New Kip      | 8097.0 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 3.9457 |
| Nepal Rupee       | 107.3  |
| Pakistani Rupee   | 104.85 |
| Papua N.G. Kina   | 3.1646 |
| Philippine Peso   | 46.74  |
| Russian Ruble     | 63.685 |
| Saudi Riyal       | 3.7504 |
| Singapore Dollar  | 1.3479 |
| South Korean Won  | 1133.7 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee  | 145.78 |
| Taiwan Dollar     | 31.854 |
| Thai Baht         | 34.985 |
| Vietnam Dong      | 22300  |