



5,000 fish in ice at Japan skating rink sparks uproar

TOKYO (AP) — An amusement park in western Japan sparked an uproar after it displayed about 5,000 dead fish in the ice at a skating rink, forcing the park to close the attraction. Space World received a flood of criticism on social media after opening the rink on November 12. It closed the next day. About 25 different kinds of fish could be seen under the 820-foot-long ice circuit. The park in the city of Kitakyushu opened the “Ice Aquarium” as an “attraction never heard about.” Japanese broadcaster NHK showed the fish frozen in ice on a blue floor, so it looked like they were swimming below the ice. Some formed a school to spell out “HELLO” or make an arrow-shaped sign in the ice. The general manager of Space World, Toshimi Takeda, said many critical messages were posted on social media, some condemning the concept as abusing living things. Takeda said the fish in the ice had been intended “to give the feel of the ocean to the ice skating rink,” and that the amusement park is “extremely remorseful to have invoked such unpleasant feelings.” Space World said the fish were purchased from a fish market, and were dead before the water was frozen. The operator planned to hold a memorial service for the fish once they’re taken out of the ice.

Asia odd news: Azalea the smoking chimp

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Pyongyang’s recently opened zoo has a new star: Azalea, the smoking chimpanzee. According to officials at the newly renovated zoo, which has become a favorite leisure spot in the North Korean capital since it re-opened in July, the 19-year-old female chimpanzee, whose name in Korean is “Dallae,” smokes about a pack a day. Dallae is short for azalea. They insist, however, she doesn’t inhale. Thrown a lighter by a zoo trainer, the chimpanzee lights her own cigarettes. If a lighter isn’t available, she can light up from a lit cigarette if one is tossed her way. Though such a sight would draw outrage in many other locales, it seemed to delight visitors who roared with laughter as the chimpanzee, one of two at the zoo, sat puffing away as her trainer egged her on. The trainer also prompted her to touch her nose, bow thank you, and do a simple dance.

Blue pills in Blue House: S. Korean leader explains Viagra

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Little blue pills in the Blue House? South Korean President Park Geun-hye’s office confirmed revelations by an opposition lawmaker that it purchased about 360 erectile dysfunction Viagra pills and the generic version of the drug last December. While the report created a frenzy on the internet, Park’s office said the pills were bought to potentially treat altitude sickness for presidential aides and employees on Park’s May trips to Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya, whose capitals are 0.6 to 1.2 miles above sea level. The pills weren’t used, said Jung Youn-kuk, spokesman of the presidential Blue House. South Korean doctors sometimes prescribe Viagra-style drugs to climbers because they are believed to be effective in preventing altitude sickness. The Viagra revelation was just the latest twist in the massive political scandal building around Park. Prosecutors indicted Park and two former presidential aides. Prosecutors believe Park was collusively involved in the criminal activities of her longtime friend, Choi Soon-sil, and the two aides, who allegedly bullied companies into giving tens of millions of dollars to foundations and businesses Choi controlled, and also enabled Choi to interfere with state affairs.

Vietnam formally scraps plans for first nuclear power plants

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Vietnam’s legislature has endorsed the government’s decision to scrap plans to build the country’s first two nuclear power plants. The government announcement of the endorsement said cheaper renewable energy and power imports were available and that investment should be made in more urgent infrastructure needs. The National Assembly in 2009 approved plans to build two nuclear power plants with combined capacity of 4,000 megawatts. Construction was initially scheduled to start in 2014 but was delayed several times. The contracts to build the plants were awarded to companies from Russia and Japan. The construction partners regretted that Vietnam was scrapping the plans but respected the decision, the government said. The cancellation dealt a blow to Japan’s plans to export nuclear power plants to counter shrinking sales at home since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The two plants would have contributed about 5.7 percent of Vietnam’s power output when completed in 2030 and that could be offset by other sources of energy, the government said. State media reports said the nuclear power plants were not economically viable because of cheaper sources of power such as coal and gas and that the costs of the plants had doubled to \$18 billion.

Toyota says new technology means longer battery life

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota Motor Corp. says it has developed a new way of observing the movements of tiny particles in a battery used to power electric vehicles — an advance it says will help boost their cruise range by 10 percent to 15 percent. Toyota engineer Hisao Yamashige explained to reporters at the Japanese automaker’s Tokyo office that the complex method for tracking the lithium ions, which are tiny particles in lithium-ion batteries, is also used in laptops and smartphones. Increasing cruise range is the biggest obstacle for electric vehicles, especially because powering stations aren’t as common as gas stations. Toyota is more bullish about fuel-cell vehicles, which are expensive but can deliver the same cruise range as gas engines. Yamashige said there is no change to that overall company policy.



EARLY HATSUYUKI. A staff worker walks in the snow at Kanda Myojin shrine in Tokyo in late November. Tokyo residents woke up to the first November snowfall in more than 50 years last month. Above-freezing temperatures kept the snow from sticking in most places, though it did accumulate on sidewalks and cars in Tokyo’s far western suburbs. The last time it snowed in central Tokyo in November was in 1962. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Snow falls in November in Tokyo for first time in 54 years

TOKYO (AP) — Tokyo residents woke up November 24 to the first November snowfall in more than 50 years. And the Japan Meteorological Agency said it was the first time fallen snow on the ground was observed in November since such records started to be taken in 1875.

An unusually cold air mass brought wet snow to Japan’s capital. Above-freezing temperatures kept the snow from sticking in most places, though it did accumulate on sidewalks and cars in Tokyo’s far western suburbs.

Meteorologists had forecasted that up to one inch would fall with more in the mountains northwest of Tokyo.

The snow caused minor train delays during the morning commute.

The last time it snowed in central Tokyo in November was 1962.

Prior to November 24, the earliest time snow had accumulated on the ground in the winter

season was on December 6, 1987, according to the agency.

The agency monitors various esoteric weather indicators, Japanese-style, such as announcing when cherry blossoms have started to bloom by observing a certain tree. The benchmark *sakura* tree for Tokyo grows in Yasukuni Shrine, which has drawn controversy because it honors all Japanese soldiers who died in war, including war criminals.

The first snowfall is *hatsuyuki*, which literally translates to “first snow.” Snow on the ground is called *sekisetsu*, and declared when more than half a designated area in Tokyo, called Kitanomaru, turns white, the agency said.

Japanese culture is especially sensitive to the changing seasons. Haiku, for instance, must include words that denote spring, summer, fall, or winter.

Rowing, canoe sprint, swimming to remain at Tokyo venues

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Olympic organizers have agreed to keep the rowing, canoe sprint, and swimming venues at their planned sites in Tokyo for the 2020 Games, while postponing a decision until Christmas on a possible switch for volleyball.

Representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Tokyo organizers, and Japan’s central and city governments have been discussing ways to reduce costs, including possibly moving three sports from planned new venues to existing ones.

The group was established in October after a

Tokyo government panel said the cost of the Olympics could exceed 3 trillion yen (\$27 billion) unless drastic cuts were made.

The Tokyo panel initially proposed moving the rowing and canoe sprint venue, currently planned at the Sea Forest in Tokyo, to Miyagi prefecture, 250 miles north of Tokyo, after its cost estimate soared to nearly 50 billion yen (\$450 million). A new feasibility study shows the cost could come down to around 30 billion yen (\$270 million).

“Considering the cost, location, and various other factors, we have decided to hold (the rowing and canoeing) at the planned Sea

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Asian Currency Exchange Rates
Units per U.S. dollar as of 12/02

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Cambodian Riel	4032.0
China Renminbi	6.8866
Fijian Dollar	2.0739
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7553
Indian Rupee	68.225
Indonesian Rupiah	13512
Iranian Rial	32130
Japanese Yen	113.51
Laos New Kip	8193.0
Malaysian Ringgit	4.4532
Nepal Rupee	109.18
Pakistani Rupee	104.82
Papua N.G. Kina	3.1745
Philippine Peso	49.604
Russian Ruble	63.794
Saudi Riyal	3.7507
Singapore Dollar	1.4196
South Korean Won	1168.5
Sri Lankan Rupee	148.52
Taiwan Dollar	31.891
Thai Baht	35.659
Vietnam Dong	22539