

Thriller *Trivisa* wins big at Hong Kong Film Awards

HONG KONG (AP) — Crime thriller *Trivisa* was the big winner at the Hong Kong Film Awards, taking home five awards including the prize for best film. The movie, which takes place on the eve of Hong Kong’s 1997 handover from Britain, also took home awards for best director and best actor. News sites in mainland China downplayed the coverage, which Hong Kong media speculated was because one of its directors worked on 2016’s *Ten Years*, about Beijing’s tightening grip on the semiautonomous city. Best actress went to *Happiness* star Kara Hui. She won her fourth Hong Kong Film Award for playing a middle-aged recluse suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Family-themed movie *Mad World* was another big winner, receiving trophies for best supporting actor and actress and best new director.

Coldplay vocalist visits sick fan in Manila hospital

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Coldplay’s lead vocalist visited a fan with cancer hours before the group played a packed concert at Manila’s seaside Mall of Asia Arena Concert Grounds. Chris Martin visited Ken Valiant Santiago in a hospital where the medical student is battling cancer and spends much of the time listening to favorite Coldplay songs. Concert organizer Rhiza Pascua tweeted a picture of the meeting. “Chris Martin, you are an angel! Thank you for making Ken very happy!!” she added. Santiago’s brother, Kheil, earlier posted an appeal on Facebook for help in relaying a request to the band to say hello or send a short message to his brother, who bought a ticket but could not make it to the concert. He was diagnosed with advanced cancer in February, Kheil said. In a tweet, Ken thanked Pascua for making Martin’s visit possible. “Words can’t even begin to describe how thankful I am,” he said. “You’ve made my heart full of joy. Thank you so much!”

Man who bought orangutan, leopard, and bear arrested

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian police say they saved a sun bear, a clouded leopard, and a baby orangutan from the wildlife trade after receiving a tip from conservationists who tracked the illegal activities through Instagram. Jakarta police spokesman Prabowo Argo Yuwono said Abdul Malik was arrested in a raid on his southern Jakarta house where the animals were found caged. The 42-year-old Malik told police he arranged for the purchase of the animals through Instagram messages and paid 25 million rupiah (\$1,900) for the orangutan, 15 million rupiah (\$1,125) for the sun bear, and 60 million rupiah (\$4,500) for the leopard. Yuwono said the police were helped by conservationists who were tracking an Instagram account they believed to be a front for the illegal trade in threatened species.

Construction starts on China-funded Cambodian stadium

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia has begun construction of a new \$157 million football stadium funded by China, the Southeast Asian country’s most important ally. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said at the groundbreaking ceremony that China’s support for the stadium, to be used for hosting the Southeast Asian Games in 2023, is evidence of the close cooperation of the two countries. Beijing has provided millions of dollars in aid and investment for Cambodia over the past decade, and in return has secured its political support in international forums. The new stadium is six miles north of Phnom Penh and will have a capacity of 60,000, second only to Phnom Penh’s Olympic Stadium, constructed in 1964 to hold 70,000 spectators.

Poachers kill rare one-horned rhino in southern Nepal forest

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Authorities are searching for poachers who killed a rare one-horned rhinoceros in the forests of southern Nepal and cut off its horn, according to officials. Forest officer Nurendra Aryal said it was the first killing of a rhino in the Chitwan National Forest in nearly three years. Soldiers and forest rangers were scouring the forests and nearby areas for the people who shot the rhino. Aryal said the night the animal died was a stormy night, so forest officers did not hear a gunshot or spot the poachers enter the area. The forest, located about 100 miles south of Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu, and bordering India, is protected by the government and guarded by armed soldiers. Nepal has been working to increase the number of one-horned rhinos in Chitwan National Forest, where the population has reached 605.

Bombs bring down scores of power poles in Thailand

HAT YAI, Thailand (AP) — Suspected Muslim insurgents set off dozens of bombs in southern Thailand, bringing down power lines and setting tires on fire to block roads. Security officials said there were no reports of deaths or injuries. Most of the attacks occurred in Muslim-majority provinces in Buddhist-dominated Thailand’s deep south, where about 7,000 people have been killed in a separatist insurgency that flared in 2004. Thai media speculated the actions were in response to the ratification of Thailand’s new constitution, but officials say no information connecting the events. Military spokesman Pramote Prom-in said 52 electric poles were damaged by explosives in the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla, causing scattered minor blackouts. He said officials also discovered burnt tires and more explosives, but reported no injuries or deaths. Men with grenade launchers and other heavy weapons attacked a police checkpoint in Yala, injuring six officers. Three previous attacks killed an army ranger and a policeman. Don Pathan, a security analyst specializing in southern Thailand, said he believed the incidents were not related to the new constitution but were meant to discredit the security apparatus in response to a police shooting that killed two people whom friends said were unarmed.



METING OUT T.P. A man tries out a facial recognition toilet paper dispenser in a restroom at the Temple of Heaven park in Beijing, China. At Beijing’s 600-year-old temple, administrators recognized the need to stock the public bathrooms with toilet paper, a requirement for obtaining a top rating from the National Tourism Authority. But they needed a means of preventing patrons from stripping them bare for personal use — hence the introduction of new technology that dispenses just one two-foot section of paper every nine minutes following a face scan. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Using technology, China continues its ‘toilet revolution’

By Zhang Weiqun
The Associated Press

BEIJING — Fed up with the theft of toilet paper from public bathrooms, tourist authorities in China’s capital have begun using facial recognition technology to limit how much paper a person can take.

The unusual move — part of a “toilet revolution” — is another step in China’s vast upgrading of public facilities.

Bathrooms at tourist sites, notorious for their primitive conditions and nasty odors, are a special focus of the campaign, a response to a vast expansion in domestic travel and demands for better-quality facilities from a more affluent public.

“Today in China, people are highly enthusiastic about tourism, and we have entered a new era of public tourism,” said Zhan Dongmei, a researcher with the China Tourism Academy. “The expectation of the public for the toilet is becoming higher.”

At Beijing’s 600-year-old Temple of Heaven, administrators recognized the need to stock the public bathrooms with toilet paper, a requirement for obtaining a top rating from the National Tourism Authority. But they needed a means of preventing patrons from stripping them bare for personal use — hence the introduction of new technology that dispenses just one two-foot section of paper every nine minutes following a face scan.

“People take away the paper mostly because they are worried they can’t find any when they want to use it the next time. But if we can provide it in every toilet, most people will not do it anymore,” Zhan said.

Launched two years ago, the revolution calls

for at least 34,000 new public bathrooms to be constructed in Beijing and 23,000 renovated by the end of this year. Authorities are also encouraging the installation of western-style sit-down commodes rather than the more common squat toilets. Around \$3.6 billion has already been spent on the program, according to the National Tourism Administration.

The ultimate target, Zhan said, “is to have a sufficient amount of toilets which are clean and odorless and free to use.”

At Happy Valley, the largest amusement park in Beijing, around 4 million annual visitors rely on 18 bathrooms, each of which is assigned one or two cleaners who must make their rounds every 10 minutes on busy days.

“People come here to have fun, but if the toilets are disgusting, how can they have a good time here?” said vice general manager Li Xiangyang. “It is the least we should do to offer a clean and tidy environment for tourists to enjoy both the tour of the park and the experience of using our toilets.”

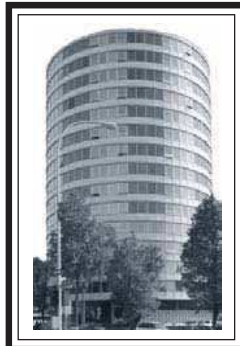
Going a step further, the financial hub of Shanghai even opened its first gender-neutral public toilet in November in order to boost convenience and efficiency.

“Women are stuck waiting in longer lines for stalls than men, and it is fair for men and women to wait in line together,” Shanghai resident Zhu Jingyi said after using the facility.

Zhan said the toilet revolution is about 90 percent complete, but warned that it has yet to be won.

“We can’t accept the situation that a lot of investments have been made to build toilets and they turn out to be unsanitary and poorly managed,” he said.

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Hong Kong Dollar	7.7739
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Indonesian Rupiah	13265
Iranian Rial	32472
Japanese Yen	109.27
Laos New Kip	8210.0
Malaysian Ringgit	4.4128
Nepal Rupee	103.05
Pakistani Rupee	104.78
Papua N.G. Kina	3.279
Philippine Peso	49.422
Russian Ruble	56.255
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Sri Lankan Rupee	152.17
Taiwan Dollar	30.334
Thai Baht	34.33
Vietnam Dong	22871