



Company gives extra holidays to nonsmoking employees

TOKYO (AP) — A marketing company in Tokyo is awarding a novel perk to its non-puffing employees: an extra week’s holiday for nonsmokers. The corporate planning director for Piala, Hirotaka Matsushima, said the company began offering the six days of extra vacation to all of its 120 staff members in September. “Yes, it’s pretty popular,” said Matsushima, himself a nonsmoker. He said the policy was installed as a benefit for nonsmokers to compensate for smoking breaks taken by their colleagues. About two-thirds of the company’s employees don’t smoke, he said. Overall, smoking is still quite prevalent in Japan, with almost 20 percent of over-20-year-olds saying they smoke. Nearly 40 percent of men in their 30s smoke, though that’s down from more than half in 2001, according to government figures. But most office workers must do their puffing in designated smoking rooms and outdoor areas, and cities are gradually imposing limits on outdoor smoking in public areas. Most restaurants and bars still allow smoking. Piala, established in 2004, says it provides advertising and automated marketing services for direct marketers and other companies.

Church bell rings in Kashmir church after five decades

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — A church bell has rung for the first time in five decades at the largest Catholic church in the main city of India’s portion of Muslim-majority Kashmir. Members of Srinagar’s tiny Christian community assembled at the 120-year-old Holy Family Catholic Church and celebrated the installation of the new bell, which weighs 231 pounds. The British-era church lost its original bell 50 years ago in an arson attack. People from other faiths, including Muslims and Hindus, also participated in the event. India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim the Himalayan territory in its entirety. Rebel groups have been fighting since 1989 for the India-administered portion to become independent or merge with Pakistan.

Philippine leader says someone should talk to Kim Jong Un

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte says someone should talk to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to convince him nobody is out to remove him or destroy his country. “A nuclear war is totally unacceptable to everybody,” Duterte said before flying to a two-day visit to Japan. “And somebody has to talk to Kim Jong Un.” Duterte said North Korea’s nuclear threat is among issues to discuss with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo and with President Donald Trump when Trump visits Manila. He suggested the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and others assure Kim nobody is threatening him and to ask him to stop threatening a nuclear attack. “It would be good if America, Japan, Korea, and Mr. Kim Jong Un talk and to convince him to sit down [at] a round table and just tell him that nobody’s threatening him, that there will be no war, and that if he can just tone down or stand down, stop the threats, and that would be the same for America,” he added. The one single country that can calm down Kim is China, Duterte added during the news conference in southern Davao City.

Giant panda sleeps through much of media debut

BOGOR, Indonesia (AP) — Giant panda Cai Tao was asleep for much of his debut before media in the Indonesian city of Bogor, but occasionally perked up to eat bamboo. Cai Tao and a much more active female, Hu Chen, were shown to reporters as part of preparations for allowing the public to see them starting later this month. The pair arrived in Indonesia in late September from Chengdu in China and were quarantined at Taman Safari zoo in Bogor, just outside the capital, Jakarta. The zoo hopes the seven-year-olds will mate and add to the giant panda population. It built a special enclosure and facilities that cost about 60 billion rupiah (\$4.5 million). Zoo director Jansen Manansang said he’s “very optimistic they can breed here next year or the year after.”

Seoul says N. Korea nuke test risks radiation leak at test site

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea says any future nuclear test by North Korea risks collapsing its mountain test site and triggering a radiation leak. South Korea’s weather agency chief Nam Jae-Cheol made the comments during a parliament committee meeting. He was responding to a lawmaker’s question about whether another North Korean test could lead to such an accident. South Korea detected several earthquakes near the North’s nuclear test site in the country’s northeast after its sixth and most powerful bomb explosion in September. Experts say the quakes suggest the area is now too unstable to conduct more tests there.

Japan’s parliament re-elects Shinzo Abe as prime minister

TOKYO (AP) — Japan’s lower house of parliament re-elected Shinzo Abe as prime minister after his party won a resounding victory in a snap election last month. Abe, who has been Japan’s leader since December 2012, easily won the balloting with 312 votes in the 465-seat lower house. He reappointed the same ministers to his cabinet later in the day. They were officially sworn in at a palace ceremony. Abe, 63, dissolved the lower house in late September to force an election. Political analysts saw the move as an attempt to win a new public mandate and re-establish his hold on power after a plunge in approval ratings during the summer. His Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a large majority in the October 22 vote. Together with a junior coalition partner, the Komei Party, it retained a two-thirds majority in the lower house. The victory boosts Abe’s chances of being re-elected as LDP leader next September for another three-year term, potentially extending his premiership to 2021.



HABITAT DESTRUCTION. In this photo released by the Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation, a recently rescued baby orangutan plays with a keeper at Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Center in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The Indonesian conservation group says the discovery of two orphaned baby orangutans on Borneo within two days is further evidence that deforestation and illegal hunting are threatening the survival of the great apes. (Bjorn Vaughn, BPI/BOS Foundation via AP)

Orangutan orphans a sign of habitat destruction

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — An Indonesian conservation group says the discovery of two orphaned baby orangutans on Borneo is further evidence that deforestation and illegal hunting are threatening the survival of the great apes.

Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation spokesman Nico Hermanu said the two orangutans were rescued in separate locations by a joint team from the foundation and government.

A male between six and eight months old was rescued after being reported alone on a riverbank near a village in Central Kalimantan and a three-year-old female, weighing only 11 pounds, was rescued from villagers in the province the day before.

The foundation has found 19 baby orangutans so far this year.

It says that as more forests are cleared, “hunters are able to reach previously isolated areas and orangutans.”

Volvo’s electric car brand Polestar unveils first model

By Joe McDonald
AP Business Writer

BEIJING — Volvo Cars’ performance electric car brand, Polestar, unveiled a four-seat coupe in lightweight carbon fiber as its first model, adding to competition in a market dominated until now by Tesla.

The hybrid Polestar 1 promises a range of 150 kilometers (95 miles) on a charge, with a gasoline-powered engine to supplement that if needed. It is due to be produced at a factory in western China and released in 2019.

Volvo, owned since 2010 by Chinese automaker Geely Holding, announced in July that it would make only electric and hybrid vehicles starting in 2019.

The Swedish brand, known for comfort and safety, launched Polestar to allow a different identity based on “really sporty performance cars,” said its chief executive, Thomas Ingenlath.

“There will be a clear difference between the

two brands that add to each other in a very good way,” Ingenlath, a former Volvo senior vice president for design, said in a phone interview ahead of the model debut in Shanghai.

The company says it will follow up with an all-electric model in 2019 and an SUV in 2021.

All manufacturers are moving toward more hybrids, but industry analysts say a transition to full-electric vehicles is years away.

Volvo has announced plans to release three all-electric models under its own brand by 2021.

The next Polestar model, the mid-size Polestar 2, is intended to compete with Tesla’s Model 3, the company says. Ingenlath declined to give a price, but the Tesla starts at \$35,000.

Polestar will use an internet-based sales system with a monthly subscription fee, Ingenlath said. The company says service will include the ability to rent other Volvo and Polestar models.

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Hong Kong Dollar	7.8029
Indian Rupee	64.547
Indonesian Rupiah	13498
Iranian Rial	34.963
Japanese Yen	114.07
Laos New Kip	8314.8
Malaysian Ringgit	4.2365
Nepal Rupee	103.34
Pakistani Rupee	105.28
Papua N.G. Kina	3.244
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