



Sri Lanka arrests 22 trying to go to Australia by boat

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lankan police say they’ve arrested 22 people who were attempting to illegally migrate to Australia by boat. According to police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara, the suspects were arrested on a tip in the coastal town of Puttalam, about 74 miles north of the capital, Colombo. Sri Lankan and Australian authorities are cooperating with each other to combat human smuggling. No Sri Lankan asylum seekers have reached Australia by boat since 2013. But Sri Lankans, Iranians, and Afghans are the largest national groups among more than 2,000 asylum seekers living on the Pacific islands nations of Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Australia pays those countries to house them, but refuses to resettle any of them.

Uber signs partnership with Vietnam’s leading e-wallet firm

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Uber Technologies Inc. has signed a deal with MoMo, Vietnam’s leading financial technology firm, enabling Uber riders to pay for trips using MoMo’s e-wallets in a country where most transactions are done in cash. The partnership is Uber’s first deal with a fin-tech company in Southeast Asia. It aims to catch up with regional rival Grab, which has its own e-wallet service. Backed by Standard Chartered Bank and Goldman Sachs, MoMo has 5 million users in Vietnam who use its e-wallet to pay utility bills, buy plane tickets, and do online shopping. Brooks Entwistle, Uber’s chief business officer in the Asia Pacific, said he expects the partnership to help the two companies grow and to change Vietnam’s cash-dominated economy. Cash payments currently account for more than 90 percent of all transactions in Vietnam. The government has announced plans to reverse that ratio over the next three years, making 90 percent of transactions cashless.

Woman confessed to putting babies in concrete in the '90s

TOKYO (AP) — A Japanese woman was arrested after police said she confessed to putting four newborns in concrete-filled buckets two decades ago and having been filled with guilt over not caring for her babies. Human remains were identified in four buckets found in her condominium, an Osaka police official said, requesting anonymity due to department policy. Mayumi Saito, 53, was arrested on charges of abandoning bodies, a day after she turned herself in at the police station. Saito was quoted by police as saying she put the bodies into concrete from 1992 through 1997 because she had been too poor to raise them, but she had been filled with guilt over the years. Saito had a part-time job, but details of her work, family, and comments were not available. The causes of the babies’ deaths were unclear. It is fairly standard in Japan for criminal charges to be added later as an investigation progresses. Although Japan is the world’s third-largest economy and has a reputation as being economically advanced, poverty remains a problem, especially among women. Social support such as affordable daycare is lacking for women to be able to work while child-rearing, as well as to get counselling and other help to cope with parenting duties and mental stress. Japanese media reports quoted the woman as saying she had no one to talk to or turn to.

Police say teacher pricked children at kindergarten

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese police say a teacher at a Beijing kindergarten pricked children with needles as punishment but an investigation found no evidence of sexual exploitation. Chinese media reports about alleged abuses at the Xintiandi kindergarten have drawn nationwide anger over potential lapses in supervision in the booming private preschool industry. The school is run by Beijing-based RYB Education, a company listed on the New York Stock Exchange. RYB posted an apology on its website saying “when a needle pricks a child’s body, it also pricks every one of our hearts.” It said complaints from parents at other RYB kindergartens would be fully investigated and it would accept responsibility for harm to any of its students. The police statement said initial results of an investigation showed that a 22-year-old teacher it identified only by her surname, Liu, had punished children who refused to sleep by pricking them with sewing needles.

Vietnam court upholds jail term for blogger

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A Vietnamese appeals court has upheld a blogger’s 10-year prison sentence for Facebook posts alleged to be anti-state propaganda, according to her lawyer, in the second tough sentence imposed on dissidents in a week that drew a rebuke from the U.S. government. Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh was convicted in June of spreading propaganda by distorting government policies and defaming the communist regime. Lawyer Nguyen Ha Luan said the People’s High Court determined after a half-day hearing in the south-central province of Khanh Hoa that the conviction was justified. Quynh maintained she was innocent throughout the trial, Luan said, adding she admitted to have written the articles but saying they did not constitute a crime. The 37-year-old blogger known by her pen name Me Nam, or “Mother Mushroom,” co-founded a network of bloggers and is very popular in Vietnam. She has written about human-rights and civilian deaths in police custody and the release of toxic chemicals by a Taiwanese-owned factory that killed thousands of fish in one of Vietnam’s worst environmental disasters. U.S. Charge d’Affaires Caryn McClelland said she was “deeply troubled” by the court’s decision to uphold the sentence on a “vague” charge and called for the blogger’s release. McClelland said Quynh was one of six individuals convicted this year for exercising the right of fundamental freedom of expression, association, and of peaceful assembly. In March, Quynh received in absentia the International Women of Courage Award at the U.S. State Department. Quynh was jailed at the time.



PACHYDERM POWER. An elephant is used to demolish a house during an eviction drive inside Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Gauhati, Assam, India. Indian police took the unusual step of using elephants in an attempt to evict hundreds of people living illegally in the protected forest area in the country’s remote northeast. Police used bulldozers and the elephants in a show of force. The forest dwellers responded by hurling rocks. (AP Photo/Anupam Nath)

Indian police use elephants to clear their protected habitat

GAUHATI, India (AP) — Indian police took the unusual step of using elephants in an attempt to evict hundreds of people living illegally in a protected forest area in the country’s remote northeast.

Police used bulldozers and the elephants in a show of force. The forest dwellers responded by hurling rocks. Police commissioner Hiren Nath said five protesters were injured in a scuffle after police used tear gas in the Amchang forest area in Assam state.

Authorities plan to demolish about 1,000 bamboo and tin huts.

State forest minister Pramilla Brahma said the area is an elephant habitat and the unauthorized settlements were forcing the pachyderms to leave in search of food. There have been many incidents in which wild elephants have entered villages, destroying crops and even killing people.

Nath said the police action followed a court order to clear the forest of illegal encroachment.

The eviction drive is being carried out by wildlife wardens, with police providing protection against possible attacks by angry residents.

Obama re-emerges on global stage with trip to Asia, France

By Josh Lederman
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Now a private citizen, former President Barack Obama re-emerged on the global stage with a three-country tour that included meetings with the leaders of China and India, just as President Donald Trump courts those same world powers.

During a five-day trip, Obama mixed paid speeches with meetings with foreign leaders and even a town hall event for young people, the signature event that Obama became known for around the world during his eight years in office. He finished the trip in France.

The tour continues a longstanding tradition of former U.S. presidents travelling overseas after leaving office, especially as they work to attract donations and other support for their foundations, libraries, and presidential centers. But Obama’s trip may garner particular

attention, given that many foreign countries are still uncertain about Trump’s foreign policy and may look to his predecessor to help explain America’s current direction.

“Barack Obama is the great explainer to the rest of the world of what the heck is going on in America,” said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. “He’s a calming influence in a world that’s teetering on frenzy right now. Obama arrives and it reminds them of old-style diplomacy and the dignity of statesmanship.”

Obama spoke at a business conference in Shanghai before travelling to Beijing to speak at an education event. He also met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who hosted Trump for a high-profile visit only a few weeks earlier. Obama’s office said the global economy, climate change, and other issues were among discussions.

Then the former president went to India,

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Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 12/01

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Bangladesh Taka | 82.296 |
| Cambodian Riel | 4011.5 |
| China Renminbi | 6.6163 |
| Fijian Dollar | 2.0719 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 7.8128 |
| Indian Rupee | 64.581 |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 13523 |
| Iranian Rial | 35340 |
| Japanese Yen | 112.17 |
| Laos New Kip | 8273.3 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 4.0869 |
| Nepal Rupee | 103.17 |
| Pakistani Rupee | 105.33 |
| Papua N.G. Kina | 3.2102 |
| Philippine Peso | 50.28 |
| Russian Ruble | 58.895 |
| Saudi Riyal | 3.7503 |
| Singapore Dollar | 1.3464 |
| South Korean Won | 1086.4 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee | 153.6 |
| Taiwan Dollar | 30.008 |
| Thai Baht | 32.618 |
| Vietnam Dong | 22730 |