



## HK court upholds ruling in favor of same-sex couple

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal has ruled that the same-sex partner of a British expatriate is entitled to equal treatment under immigration law, marking a significant step for gay rights in the Chinese territory. The unanimous judgement said the woman identified only as "QT" should be issued the same dependent visa that spouses and children of other foreigners working in the Asian financial hub are entitled to. The ruling is seen as a landmark for Hong Kong, a Chinese territory and former British colony that maintains its own distinct western-style legal system. Although same-sex unions aren't recognized under Hong Kong law, the city is broadly liberal in its social values and has a large foreign population. "This judgement is a milestone for Hong Kong and a watershed moment for the rights of LGBTI people across Asia," said Jan Wetzel, senior legal adviser at Amnesty International, in an e-mailed statement. "The government must now follow up and end the discrimination same-sex couples face in all walks of life." The ruling says the policy of accepting only opposite-sex spouses as eligible for a dependent visa "constituted indirect discrimination." QT entered into a same-sex civil partnership in England with her partner, identified as "SS," but was given only a visitor's visa when the couple entered Hong Kong in 2011. That did not permit her the right to work or study, despite SS meeting the financial and other requirements for sponsoring a dependent. QT's application for a dependent visa was denied by a lower court but approved by the Court of Appeal. The immigration department appealed that ruling, arguing that Hong Kong law only recognized marriages between men and women, but the judgement turned that down. The head of the immigration department "failed to justify the discriminatory treatment," the ruling stated.

## Bishops call for three-day fast after Duterte says god stupid

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Philippine Catholic bishops have called for fasting and prayers after the president called god "stupid" and questioned god's existence in profane remarks that set the foul-mouthed leader on a collision course with Asia's largest Catholic church. Archbishop Romulo Valles, who heads the country's association of bishops, called for a day of prayers on July 16 to invoke "god's mercy and justice on those who have blasphemed god's holy name, those who slander and bear false witness, and those who commit murder or justify murder as a means for fighting criminality." Valles asked Filipino Catholics to join bishops in three more days of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving starting July 17. Duterte has had a thorny relationship with Catholic bishops, who have criticized his bloody anti-drug crackdown and vulgar language.

## 110 hospitalized in Afghanistan after drinking from river

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — An Afghan official says that at least 110 people have been hospitalized after drinking from a river in northern Parwan province. Abdul Khalil Farhangi, the head of the main hospital in Charakar, the provincial capital, said it was not clear what caused them to become ill. The symptoms included vomiting and headaches. Afghanistan's infrastructure has suffered from decades of war, and many rural communities do not have access to electricity or clean, running water.

## Myanmar court rules Reuters reporters can face full trial

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — A judge in Myanmar has ruled that the prosecution of two Reuters journalists charged with illegally possessing official information can go to full trial. The case of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo went through several months of hearings to determine if there was enough evidence to support the charges, which the reporters denied. The two had been working on stories about the Rohingya crisis in western Myanmar, where state security forces are accused of carrying out massive human-rights abuses that caused about 700,000 of the Muslim ethnic Rohingya to flee across the border to Bangladesh. The charges carry a punishment of up to 14 years in prison.

## U.S. Navy dedicates Japan-based destroyer

YOKOSUKA, Japan (AP) — The head of the U.S. Navy has dedicated one of two destroyers involved in fatal accidents in the Pacific last year to U.S. senator. John McCain. Navy secretary Richard Spencer added McCain's name to a Japan-based warship that was already named for the Arizona senator's father and grandfather. He said after a ceremony aboard the *USS John S. McCain* that recommended changes to naval practices since the accidents have been 78 percent implemented. Seventeen sailors died after the *McCain* and the *USS Fitzgerald* collided with commercial vessels in separate incidents. The ship was named after McCain's father and grandfather when it was launched in 1994. McCain is a Navy veteran. He is battling brain cancer. Spencer said McCain always put country first, as a warrior and a statesman.

## Chinese firm told to suspend \$20B Malaysia rail project

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Chinese company building a key rail link in Malaysia says it has been told to suspend work pending negotiations. It urged the new government elected months ago to honor the contract. The suspension came a day after the government called for a sharp reduction in cost for the 430 miles East Coast Rail Link. Officials say the project's actual cost is 81 billion ringgit (\$20 billion), nearly 50 percent more than estimated by the previous government. China Communication said the suspension could add to costs, losses, and damages. It called for a "win-win situation" in negotiations and urged the government to "honor and respect" the deal. The project is part of China's regional "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative.



**TRAPPED TEAM.** In this July 3, 2018 image taken from video provided by the Royal Thai Navy Facebook Page, a Thai boy smiles while a Thai Navy SEAL medic helps other injured youth inside a flooded cave in Mae Sai, northern Thailand. The daring rescue mission to extricate 12 boys and their soccer coach from the cave came to a close after 18 grueling days. The extraordinary tale riveted people worldwide. (Royal Thai Navy Facebook Page via AP)

# A Thai cave, an extraordinary tale, and a captivated world

By Ted Anthony  
The Associated Press

In the darkness, down the twisting stone tunnels and through the murky water, they awaited an uncertain future. Outside, under the skies of a modern planet, cameras and bystanders and a rapt global audience of many millions looked toward the remote hills of northern Thailand, connected by cables and satellites and wireless signals and gadgets in their pockets. For two weeks and more this went on.

We only have a hint of what the 18-day ordeal was like for the 12 young Thai soccer players and their coach. But for the rest of us, watching from afar as an uneasy planet's media juggernaut beamed us live shots and the unknowable was revealed drip by tantalizing drip, we knew one thing: It was hard to look away. Particularly when these two words were splattered across the world's websites and mobile apps in impactful typefaces: "WATCH LIVE."

Were they even alive at all in there after so many days? Probably not. And yet they were. Could we get a glimpse? There they were, captured on video, waving tentatively to what had fast become their public. Could they be pulled out, through water that rose and fell and threatened to rise again? That question, drawn out for so many days as the clock ticked menacingly, found its answer with a resounding yes.

"We really needed something to cheer for right now. We needed some positivity. We needed a good headline that could carry the day," said Daryl Van Tongeren, an associate professor of psychology at Hope College in Michigan who studies how humans build meaning in their lives.

"People started believing, like a snowball

rolling down a hill: 'Maybe they WILL get out,'" he said.

First, the obvious. These were children who did nothing wrong, and we love tales of innocents. Plus, it was easy to conclude for several days that they'd met their end prematurely and unfairly. When they did not — when children not unlike those in our own lives had a fighting chance at being OK — many eyes locked in on the story.

At that point, the saga was also fuelled by hope, and by a possibility of a good outcome — both elements of any memorable human tale.

There are other reasons this particular story was so captivating, though. They cast light on some things about ourselves and about the strange forces — sometimes wonderful and sometimes destructive — that shape our lives in a modern media society.

### The storyline couldn't have been more Hollywood

It's become cliché to compare the real world to showbiz. ("It was like something out of a movie," so many witnesses to disaster say.) But even bearing that in mind, it would have been impossible to craft a Hollywood treatment that felt more cinematic.

For several decades in the American film industry during the 20th century, a production code made sure that the bad guys couldn't win and that bad things couldn't be shown. What's less known is that the code discouraged ambiguity and subtly encouraged sharp, distinctive resolutions to plotlines — something that came to be known as the "Hollywood ending" and endures to this day.

That's what we got out of northern Thailand — a satisfying, all-tied-up-in-a-bow Hollywood ending, the kind that would make a reality-TV producer salivate.

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 7/13

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China Renminbi	6.6899
Fijian Dollar	2.1093
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8489
Indian Rupee	68.543
Indonesian Rupiah	14355
Iranian Rial	43215
Japanese Yen	112.38
Laos New Kip	8419.5
Malaysian Ringgit	4.0428
Nepal Rupee	110.13
Pakistani Rupee	121.48
Papua N.G. Kina	3.2624
Philippine Peso	53.517
Russian Ruble	62.13
Saudi Riyal	3.7554
Singapore Dollar	1.3645
South Korean Won	1130.9
Sri Lankan Rupee	159.55
Taiwan Dollar	30.545
Thai Baht	33.232
Vietnam Dong	23107