



**A WHALE OF A PROBLEM.** A 26-foot-long whale (top photo) is lifted up onto a truck after being recovered off Sardinia island, Italy. The World Wildlife Foundation is sounding the alarm over plastics in the Mediterranean Sea after a sperm whale was found dead off Sardinia with 48.5 pounds of plastic (bottom photo) found in its belly. The environmental organization said the garbage recovered from its stomach included a corrugated tube for electrical works, plastic plates, shopping bags, tangled fishing lines, and a washing detergent package with the brand and bar code still legible. The female whale beached off the northern coast of Sardinia. (Photos/ SEAME Sardinia Onlus via AP)

## WWF sounds alarm after 48 lbs. of plastic found in dead whale

By Colleen Barry  
The Associated Press

MILAN — A 26-foot-long sperm whale was found dead off Sardinia with 48.5 pounds of plastic in its belly, prompting the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) to sound an alarm over the dangers of plastic waste in the Mediterranean Sea.

The environmental group said the garbage recovered from the sperm whale's stomach included a corrugated tube for electrical works, plastic plates, shopping bags, tangled fishing lines, and a washing detergent package with its bar code still legible.

The female whale beached off the northern coast of Sardinia, within the vast Pelagos marine sanctuary that was created as a haven for dolphins, whales, and other sea life.

"It is the first time we have been confronted with an animal with such a huge quantity of garbage," Cinzia Centelegghe, a biologist with the University of Padova, told the *Turin daily La Stampa*.

The exam also determined that the whale was carrying a fetus that had died and was in an advance state of decomposition. Experts said the mother whale had been unable to digest calamari due to the huge amount of plastic it had ingested, filling two-thirds of its stomach.

WWF said plastic is one of the greatest threats to marine life and has killed at least five other whales that had ingested large amounts of it over the last two years from Europe to Asia.

Another sperm whale died off the Italian island of Ischia, near Naples, last December with plastic bags and a thick nylon thread in its stomach, but plastic was not the cause of death.

The World Wildlife Foundation said between 150,000 and 500,000 tons of plastic objects and 70,000 to 130,000 tons of micro-plastics wind up in Europe's seas each year.

To combat the phenomenon, the European parliament has approved a new law banning a wide range of single-use



plastic products, including plates and straws, starting in 2021.

Italy's environment minister, Sergio Costa, lamented the whale's death and said he planned to propose a new law to limit the use of plastics.

The law will permit fishermen to bring plastics recovered at sea to land for proper disposal, which they currently are barred from doing. Costa also pledged Italy would be one of the first countries to enact the European single-use plastics ban and appealed to the mayors of Italian cities and coastal towns to adopt the ordinances in advance of the 2021 law.

"We have been using disposable plastics in a carefree way in these years, and now we are paying the price," he said. "The war on disposable plastics has started. And we won't stop here."

## Filipinos plan more diggings where new human species found

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belonged to small-bodied people. Bones of deer and related animals were found in the area, some with cut marks, suggesting they were butchered although there were no stone tools or sharp implements found in the immediate area where the human fossils were dug up, Mijares said.

Although the find contributes a new insight into modern man's ancient beginnings, Dizon said it also raised new questions and deepened the mystery behind the evolution of man.

## Japan government says era name translates as "Beautiful Harmony"

By Mari Yamaguchi  
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's government says the official translation of the era name for the new emperor will be "Beautiful Harmony," setting off confusion while offices rush to make changes before Crown Prince Naruhito takes the throne.

The era of "Reiwa" begins May 1, a day after 85-year-old Emperor Akihito abdicates and hands over the chrysanthemum throne to his elder son.

The cultural importance of the imperial family and the secretive naming process recently created a frenzy of attention for the announcement of the era name.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the name, composed of two Chinese characters, was taken for the first time from an ancient Japanese book instead of from Chinese classics. He said it comes from a section about plum blossoms in *Manyoshu*, a poetry anthology from the 7th-8th centuries, and suggests that "culture is born and nurtured as the people's hearts are beautifully drawn together."

Abe did not say which of a range of meanings for each of the two Chinese characters applied to the era name.

Experts and media had a variety of interpretations of the meaning, and initial reports generally settled on "pursuing harmony." The first character can also mean order, rule, good, or auspicious. The second can mean peace, reconciliation, or soft.

A Foreign Ministry official provided the official translation.

"Reiwa" is best interpreted as "Beautiful Harmony," said Masaru Sato, the deputy consul-general and director of the Japan Information Center in New York. "Reiwa" refers to the beauty of plum blossoms after a tough winter, and is taken to mean the beauty of people when they bring their hearts together to cultivate a culture."

However, some experts said the first Chinese character, "Rei," today is most widely thought to mean "order," "command," and "dictate," with an authoritarian tone.

Historians and experts on the monarchy noted that an 1864 era name proposal of "Reitoku" using the same first character was rejected by the Tokugawa Shogunate, which said it sounded like the emperor was commanding Tokugawa.

"The name sounds as if we are ordered to achieve peace, rather than doing so proactively," Kazuto Hongo, a University of Tokyo historian, said on TV Asahi.

Yoshinori Kobayashi, a conservative

## Indonesians wrestle with voting choices and giant ballots

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — When Indonesians vote in presidential and legislative elections, they'll be wrestling with choices affecting their country's future, and ballots as big as posters.

The super-sized documents, some too big to fit unfolded inside the voting booths, are causing complaints as well as worries that elderly voters will struggle with them.

The ballot for the senate covered more than half the body of a woman who held it up at a polling simulation exercise held by the election commission.

"This certainly makes it difficult for people to vote," said Jakarta resident Siti Nuria.

"Why can't this vote be made simpler? It will be very troublesome for the elderly to vote and in folding them back up," she said.

Despite the big size, others complained the writing was still too small.

"We hope that in the future it can be simpler, with paper sizes that are not too large and names that are printed with larger font sizes," said Susanti Sidiq.

Indonesia, the world's third-biggest democracy after India and the U.S. and a



**BEAUTIFUL HARMONY.** Kane Tanaka, who is honored as the world's oldest living person by Guinness World Records at age 116, poses with the new era name, "Reiwa," made of chocolate, at a nursing home in Fukuoka, southwestern Japan. Tanaka was born in the Meiji era, and will soon experience a fifth era, starting on May 1. (Ryosuke Uematsu/Kyodo News via AP)

cartoonist who has written books on Japanese emperors, said the character "Rei" portrays "the people kneeling down under the crown. It's meaning, after all, is a command of a monarch or a ruler. ... It is inevitable that 'Reiwa' gives a somewhat cold impression."

As discussions of the era name dominated Japanese newspapers and television talk shows, stores began selling Reiwa goods.

A bakery in Tokyo sold cupcakes decorated with Reiwa toppings, and sweet bean cakes carrying Reiwa logos quickly sold out at a souvenir shop inside Japan's parliament building. Some bookstores set up *Manyoshu* sections, and many editions of the anthology were out of stock on Amazon. Department stores planned to sell gold coins emblazoned with Reiwa.

The announcement gave the government, businesses, and people only a month to adjust to a change that affects many parts of Japanese society, though the emperor has no political power under Japan's postwar constitution. Era names are still widely used in government and business documents and on calendars. Many people use them to identify generations and historical periods.

Discussing an era change in advance was not considered a taboo this time because Akihito is abdicating, a highly unusual step.



**BIG BALLOTS.** A man inspects a mock national legislature ballot, which this year is as large as a poster, at a voting booth during a polling simulation exercise held by the election commission in Jakarta, Indonesia. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara)

stronghold of democracy in a neighborhood of authoritarian nations, holds elections for president, senate, and national, provincial, and district legislatures on April 17. About 190 million people are eligible to vote.

Polls say President Joko Widodo has a big lead over his challenger, former special forces Gen. Prabowo Subianto, though many voters remain undecided.

