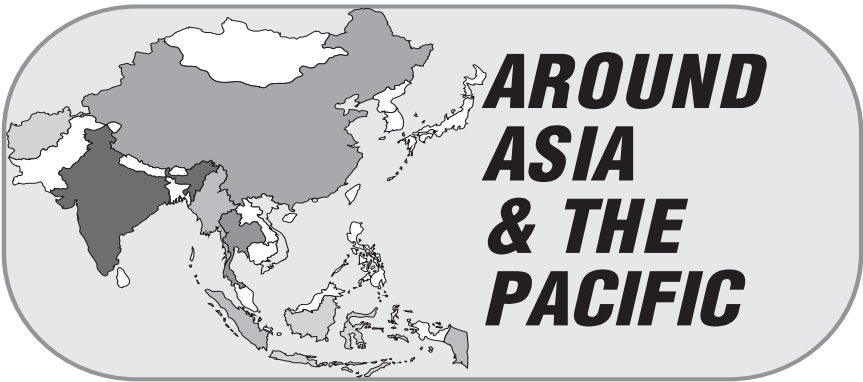




Myanmar pardons 9,551 prisoners but not two reporters

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — More than 9,500 prisoners are being released in Myanmar under a presidential amnesty, but they don’t include two Pulitzer Prize-winning Reuters reporters. The Facebook page of the Office of President Win Myint says he has signed a pardon for 9,551 prisoners, including 16 foreigners, released nationwide on the occasion of the country’s traditional New Year. Official lists of those to be freed are usually not made public, but activists monitor releases, especially at Yangon’s Insein Prison, where most important detainees are held. Sympathizers waited outside the prison for the possible release of two Reuters reporters jailed for breaking the Official Secrets Act, but they were not freed. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says it knew of only two political detainees, imprisoned since 2000, being released.

Devotees nailed to crosses on Good Friday in Philippines

SAN PEDRO CUTUD, Philippines (AP) — Several Roman Catholic devotees were nailed to wooden crosses in a gory Good Friday ritual in the Philippines, and others flogged themselves or took part in religious plays to reenact Jesus Christ’s suffering. Four men and a woman wearing crowns of twigs were escorted by villagers dressed as Roman centurions and nailed to crosses on a dusty hill in San Pedro Cutud village. Similar reenactments played out in nearby farming towns. Thousands, including many tourists, watched the annual spectacle. The Catholic Church frowns upon it, instead calling on the faithful to mark Lent with prayers and acts of charity. Prior to the reenacted crucifixions, dozens of penitents beat their bare backs with sharp bamboo sticks and wood. Some had their backs cut to keep them bloody.

Four wives of Abu Sayyaf commanders arrested

ZAMBOANGA, The Philippines (AP) — Philippine police say they have captured four wives of Abu Sayyaf commanders who take care of their financial transactions, help procure guns and bomb parts, and arrange the travels of foreign militants to the country. Police say the women were arrested in raids on houses in southern Zamboanga city where authorities seized two grenades, a bag of suspected ammonium nitrate, and electrical parts that can be used to make bombs. Police say the women work under Abu Sayyaf leader Hajan Sawadjaan, who is the main suspect in the January 27 bombing of a Roman Catholic cathedral during a mass that killed 23 people in nearby Sulu province. The cathedral attack by two suspected suicide bombers sparked the latest military offensive against the Abu Sayyaf.

Malaysia to revive major China-linked property project

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia’s government says it will resurrect a multibillion-dollar property project in Kuala Lumpur involving a Chinese state company, calling it a contribution to China’s “Belt and Road” infrastructure initiative. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad says the cabinet agreed to reinstate the Bandar Malaysia project, which is expected to cost 140 billion ringgit (\$33.8 billion). He said the project, which is 40-percent owned by the government, will be developed with the same consortium partners, local developer Iskandar Waterfront Holdings and China Railway Engineering Corp. The project was started by the indebted 1MDB state investment fund, which sold a 60-percent stake to the consortium. The project was terminated in May 2017 due to a payment dispute. The 1MDB scandal led to former Prime Minister Najib Razak’s election ouster last May.

Thousands march in Hong Kong against extradition law

HONG KONG (AP) — Thousands of protesters marched through downtown Hong Kong in opposition to changes to an extradition law that many see as eroding the territory’s independent legal system. Many of those who took part carried yellow umbrellas, recalling Hong Kong’s massive 2014 pro-democracy protests, the leaders of which have been sentenced to up to 16 months in prison. Hong Kong police said around 22,800 people took part in the protest at its peak period. Participants carried placards accusing Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam of “selling out” Hong Kong, and called on her to resign. Revisions to the law would make it easier to send criminal suspects to mainland China, where they could face vague national security charges and unfair trials. Hong Kong’s legal system offers greater protections than in mainland China.

China seizes 2,700 ivory tusks in massive smuggling case

BEIJING (AP) — China has seized more than 2,700 ivory tusks in what customs authorities are calling the country’s biggest smuggling case in years. China’s Customs Administration announced that it confiscated nearly 7.5 tons of ivory on March 30. The illicit goods came from an international criminal group that has been smuggling ivory for some time, authorities said, noting that 20 suspects are now in custody. Since the start of the year, customs officers have seized a total of 8.5 tons of ivory products through 53 investigations. An additional 129 cases involved the smuggling of other endangered animal products, including pangolin scales, shark fins, and turtle shells. The ivory seized March 30 came from Nigeria and other African countries, according to officials. It was shipped across multiple countries, hidden in cargo containers of wood, and kept in an old Chinese waste factory while the suspects prepared to sell it. China has cracked down on smuggling in recent years and implemented in 2018 a total ban on all trade in ivory products. The ban does not cover the semiautonomous port of Hong Kong, which remains a major transit point for endangered species products and other contraband. The financial center is now working toward a complete ban on the local ivory trade, slated to begin by 2021.



RARE REPTILE. Nguyen Quang Hue touches an injured giant softshell turtle after he and other workers pulled it from Hoan Kiem Lake in Hanoi, Vietnam, in this file photo taken on April 3, 2011. Veterinarians examined the rare giant turtle, which has a shell the size of a desk, is estimated to weigh about 440 pounds, and is considered sacred by many Vietnamese, at a makeshift hospital in Hanoi to check mysterious lesions afflicting one of the last known members of its species. (AP Photo/Na Son Nguyen, File)

Death of rare turtle leaves three remaining in the world

BEIJING (AP) — The only known female member of one of the world’s rarest turtle species has died at a zoo in southern China, officials said.

The animal was one of four Yangtze giant softshell turtles known to be remaining in the world. The Suzhou zoo, where the female turtle lived, also houses a male Yangtze giant softshell turtle. The other two live in Vietnam, but their genders are unknown.

The turtle died April 13, the Suzhou city government said in a statement, citing the zoo. It said experts have already used technology to collect the turtle’s ovarian tissue for future research.

The state-run *People’s Daily* reported that

the turtle was over 90 years old and had undergone a fifth attempt at artificial insemination shortly before she died.

A medical examination found the turtle to be in good health prior to the procedure, the *People’s Daily* said, and the artificial insemination appeared to go smoothly. But the turtle died the following day.

Yangtze giant softshell turtles originated in China, making their homes in the Yangtze River and Taihu Lake, according to the *People’s Daily*. The species is often referred to as the most endangered turtle in the world.

Suzhou authorities said Chinese and foreign experts are investigating the cause of the turtle’s death.

In Cantonese opera, Trump finds his twin brother in China

HONG KONG (AP) — With the blond wig and red tie, the star of the Cantonese opera in Hong Kong may look familiar.

The Chinese actor and singer had the lead role in *Trump on Show*, a four-day comedic opera reimagining the U.S. president’s personal life and his fictional twin brother who lives in China.

The three-hour opera opened with America’s first family moving into the White House, where Trump’s daughter Ivanka discovers an old suitcase. Inside she finds an English version of *The Little Red Book*, which details ideas on class struggle by the founding chairman of modern communist China.

In the show, Donald Trump goes to China and meets Mao and Zhou En-lai, the first

premier of communist China. Trump also receives a visit from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the U.S.

Li Kui-Ming, a 64-year-old feng shui master turned Cantonese opera playwright, explains that his 34th opera piece does not aim to focus on serious international politics. Rather, the show simply uses current political characters to grab the audience’s attention.

“It could definitely draw people’s attention if the play is about popular political figures due to their popularity and influence. I hope this opera will get my ideas across to the audience,” he said.

He hopes that one day *Trump on Show* could even be performed at the White House or in

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Cambodian Riel	· · · ·	4055.8
China Renminbi	· · · ·	6.7337
Fijian Dollar	· · · · ·	2.1227
Hong Kong Dollar	· · · ·	7.845
Indian Rupee	· · · · ·	69.079
Indonesian Rupiah	· · · ·	14240
Iranian Rial	· · · · ·	42017
Japanese Yen	· · · · ·	111.27
Laos New Kip	· · · · ·	8651.4
Malaysian Ringgit	· · · ·	4.141
Nepal Rupee	· · · · ·	111.11
Pakistani Rupee	· · · ·	140.9
Papua N.G. Kina	· · · ·	3.367
Philippine Peso	· · · · ·	51.85
Russian Ruble	· · · · ·	65.1
Saudi Riyal	· · · · ·	3.7502
Singapore Dollar	· · · ·	1.3606
South Korean Won	· · · ·	1166.0
Sri Lankan Rupee	· · · ·	177.32
Taiwan Dollar	· · · · ·	30.872
Thai Baht	· · · · ·	31.92
Vietnam Dong	· · · · ·	23153