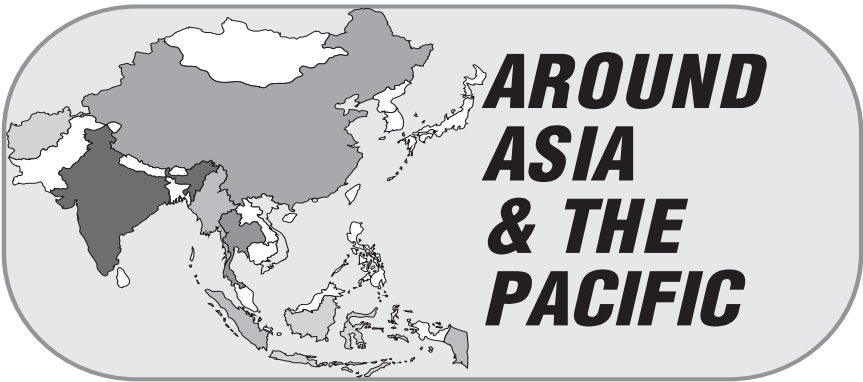




Lost baby dugong dies of shock, ingesting plastic

BANGKOK (AP) — An eight-month-old dugong nurtured by marine experts after it was found lost near a beach in southern Thailand has died of what biologists believe was a combination of shock and ingesting plastic waste. The female dugong — a large ocean mammal — was named “Marium” and became a hit in Thailand after images of biologists embracing and feeding her with milk and sea grass spread across social media. Veterinarians and volunteers had set out in canoes to feed Marium for up to 15 times a day while also giving her health checks. Last week, she was found bruised after being chased and supposedly attacked by a male dugong during the mating season, said Jatuporn Buruspat, the director-general of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. She was brought in for treatment in the artificial sea on Libong Island in Krabi province. “We assume she wandered off too far from her natural habitat and was chased, and eventually attacked by another male dugong, or dugongs, as they feel attracted to her,” he said. An autopsy showed a large amount of plastic waste in her intestine, which could also have played a part in her death as it led to gastritis and blood infection, he said. “She must’ve thought these plastics were edible,” Jatuporn said. The dugong is a species of marine mammal similar to the American manatee. It can grow to about 11 feet in length. Its conservation status is listed as vulnerable.

First-round NBA pick Hachimura scores 35 points for Japan

CHIBA, Japan (AP) — First-round National Basketball Association (NBA) draft pick Rui Hachimura scored 35 points to lead Japan to a 99-89 win over New Zealand in a World Cup warm-up game at Port Chiba Arena. Hachimura became the first player from Japan to be chosen in the first round of the NBA draft, taken with the No. 9 overall pick by the rebuilding Washington Wizards in June. The former Gonzaga University star played in the NBA’s Summer League for the Wizards, but now will take up national duties for Japan at the World Cup and for other warm-up games, including New Zealand again on Wednesday. “We got off to a good start and went from there ... I want to lead this team,” Hachimura said after the game. “I’m just happy to be back in Japan after a while for these friendly games.” The 21-year-old from Toyama prefecture scored 22 points in the first half and impressed Detroit Pistons head coach Dwane Casey. “I think he’s going to be a heck of a player, the NBA is a physical game, a tough game. He’s got a great body for the NBA,” Casey, who is in Japan for a coaching clinic and was at the game as a spectator, told Kyodo News. “I see Rui ... developing his game to move out to the 3-point line. Because that’s where the NBA is. Great kid, great work ethic.” Tai Webster led New Zealand with 18 points. Japan played without Memphis Grizzlies’ forward Yuta Watanabe, who has an ankle injury. Japan opens its World Cup competition against Turkey on September 1 in Shanghai and then takes on Czech Republic and the United States.

Cambodian rescued after being wedged in mountain rock

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — A Cambodian man who became wedged between rocks while collecting bat droppings for sale was rescued after being trapped for almost four days. Police said Sum Bora slipped while trying to retrieve his flashlight, which he accidentally dropped in the small rocky hollow. Bat droppings — *guano* — are used as fertilizer and sold for supplementary income by poor farmers, who sometimes try to attract bats to their property. Cambodia’s *Fresh News* reported that when the 28-year-old failed to return home after three days, his worried family began to search for him. His brother discovered him in the Chakry mountain jungle in the northwestern province of Battambang and alerted authorities. Police Maj. Sareth Visen said about 200 rescue personnel took about 10 hours to carefully extricate the trapped man by destroying bits of the rock that had pinned him. Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 35% of its 15.2 million people living in poverty, according to a September 2018 report by the United Nations Development Program.

Malaysia renews Aussie rare earth plant’s permit, sets rules

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia’s government extended Australian miner Lynas Corp.’s license to operate a rare earth refinery for six months but set new rules for it to tackle radioactive waste amid renewed public fears of health and environmental risks. Lynas has been operating its Malaysian refinery, the first outside China producing minerals that are crucial to high-tech manufacturing, in central Pahang state since 2012 but it hasn’t dealt with low-level radioactive waste accumulating at its plant. The Atomic Energy Licensing Board said Lynas’ operating license, which expires September 2, will be renewed for another six months but it must move its cracking and leaching process — which produces the radioactive waste from Australian ore — out of Malaysia in four years. It said in a statement that Lynas will also have to identify a site to construct a permanent disposal facility in the country or get written approval from a country willing to accept more than 580,000 tons of waste stockpiled at its refinery, which is exposed to possible floods and other natural disasters. It told the miner to halt plans to process the waste into agricultural soil conditioner. The Lynas issue has put Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s government, which won a stunning victory in general elections in May 2018, in a tight spot. Some members of the current government previously opposed Lynas’ operation in the country, citing high risks of pollution. Cabinet members are also divided, with entrepreneur minister Mohamad Redzuan Yusof supporting rare earth as a strategic industry that could open doors for new investment in the country.



HOLY HAJJ. Muslim pilgrims walk to take part in the symbolic stoning of the devil, the last rite of the annual hajj, and the first day of Eid al-Adha, in Mina, near the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on August 11, 2019. The pilgrimage to Mecca is required once in a lifetime of every Muslim if they are physically and financially able. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Over 2 million Muslims visit Mecca for hajj pilgrimage

By Bassam Hatoum and Aya Batrawy
The Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia — More than 2 million pilgrims were gathered in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia on Friday, August 9, to perform initial rites of the *hajj*, an Islamic pilgrimage that takes the faithful along a path traversed by the Prophet Muhammad some 1,400 years ago.

The hajj in Islam is meant to be a great equalizer and unifier among Muslims, with pilgrims shedding overt displays of wealth and materialism. All male pilgrims wear simple terry cloth white garments and women don conservative dress and headscarves, forgoing makeup, nail polish, and perfume in an effort to draw closer to god and engage in intense worship for the five-day hajj.

On Friday, thousands of pilgrims circled the cube-shaped Kaaba in Mecca, Islam’s holiest site. They circle the Kaaba counter-clockwise, their hearts tilting toward the structure that’s meant to symbolize the monotheistic principle of the oneness of god in Islam. Muslims around the world pray toward the Kaaba daily, using compasses to help them pray in its direction.

The hajj is one of the largest and most diverse gatherings in the world, drawing more than 1.8 million people from around the world this year, according to Saudi officials. Several hundred thousand more pilgrims are Saudi residents or citizens. Last year, 2.4 million people took part in the hajj, with similar numbers expected for 2019.

“I am very happy now. It is the first time I am here in Mecca. I am very excited,” Siti Haslina Yousof, a Malaysian pilgrim in Mecca, said.

The U.S. consulate in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, said some 20,000 U.S. citizens and residents were expected to take part in this year’s hajj.

The pilgrimage this year takes place amid a backdrop of political and sectarian tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran and as conflicts continue to flare in Yemen, Syria, and Libya. Muslim minorities around the world also face increased threats, with Uighurs facing repression in China, Rohingya facing genocide in Myanmar, and Kashmiris under a sweeping curfew and communication blackout in the Indian-administered territory.

“I cannot express my feelings. The atmosphere is spiritual, still, and tranquil. We hope Yemen will be united for good,” said Ali Ahmed Al-Sudani, a Yemeni pilgrim who said he was praying for unity in his war-torn country.

Saudi King Salman invited as his guests to the hajj this year 200 survivors and relatives of victims of a shooting spree in Christchurch, New Zealand, where a white gunman opened fire and killed 51 people in two mosques.

Those on the hajj view the pilgrimage as an opportunity to strengthen their faith, erase past sins, and start anew. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, required of all Muslims to perform once in their lifetime if they are physically and financially able.

For the well-heeled, the pilgrimage includes a partial stay in towering five-star hotels with lavish buffets overlooking the Kaaba. But for most, it means sleeping in simple accommodations or even spending weeks sleeping on the ground around Mecca’s Grand Mosque to perform daily prayers and rites near the Kaaba ahead of the hajj.

Many pilgrims will save for years to perform

Continued on page 4



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