



World Bank cuts Asia growth outlook, calls for virus action

BEIJING (AP) — The World Bank last week cut its economic growth forecast for developing countries in East Asia due to the impact of the coronavirus’s delta variant and called on governments to help poor people and small businesses avoid long-term damage. Excluding China’s unexpectedly strong growth, developing countries in East Asia should grow by 2.5% this year, down from a forecast of 4.4% in April, the Washington-based lender said in a report. It said China, the region’s biggest economy, should expand by 8.5%. The region is “suffering a reversal of fortune” after China, Vietnam, and other governments contained coronavirus outbreaks last year, the bank said. It said business activity in Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and other economies was improving but now is “showing signs of slowing down.” “The region is being hit hard by the COVID-19 Delta variant while many advanced economies are on a path to economic recovery,” the World Bank said. “COVID-19 will reduce growth and increase inequality unless the scars are addressed and the opportunities grasped.” The region must increase vaccine production due to the unreliability of imports and high demand, the bank said. It said governments also need to use testing, tracing, and isolation to contain infections and strengthen their health systems. To prevent long-term economic damage, the bank said governments need to support productive companies, encourage new competitors, promote technology development, and reduce trade barriers. Countries also need to improve “social protection” by expanding access to “need-based assistance” for the poor, the bank said.

Review of ban on eating dog meat in S. Korea welcomed

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Animal-rights groups welcomed the South Korean president’s offer to look into banning the consumption of dog meat. Dog meat is neither legal nor explicitly banned in South Korea. Restaurants that serve it are a dwindling business here as younger people find dog meat a less appetizing dining option. But some people oppose a ban as a surrender to western pressure. During a meeting with his prime minister, President Moon Jae-in asked “if it’s time to carefully consider” a ban, according to his office. It’s unclear when a review would take place and when or whether a ban would be realized. A few activists gathered in central Seoul to call for the government and parliament to work out steps to officially prohibit dog meat consumption. They placed a big placard on the street that read, “Legislate law banning the slaughters of dogs and cats!” “We actively welcome President Moon Jae-in’s comments instructing a review of the dog meat consumption ban and hope there would be substantial progress on that,” animal-rights organizations said in a joint statement. Activists later visited Moon’s presidential office and parliament to convey their calls for swift action to ban dog meat consumption, said Lee Won Bok, head of the Korea Association of Animal Protection. A public survey in 2018 indicated about 80% of South Koreans had not eaten dog meat in the previous year. Lee said an estimated about 1 million dogs are still killed each year in South Korea for food. Some older people in South Korea believe dog meat enhances sexual stamina.

China applies to join Pacific trade pact Trump abandoned

BEIJING (AP) — China has applied to join an 11-nation Asia-Pacific free trade group in an effort to increase its influence over international policies. Commerce minister Wang Wentao submitted an application to the trade minister of New Zealand as a representative of the Comprehensive and Progress Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Commerce Ministry announced in September. The CPTPP originally was the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a group promoted by then-President Barack Obama as part of Washington’s increased emphasis on relations with Asia. China was not included in the initial group and Obama’s successor, Donald Trump, pulled out in 2017. President Joe Biden has not rejoined the group. An official Chinese newspaper, *Global Times*, said the application cements Beijing’s “leadership in global trade” and leaves the United States “increasingly isolated.” The CPTPP, which took effect in 2018, includes agreements on market access, movement of labor, and government procurement. Other members include Canada, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. Britain is negotiating to join. If China joins, that would quadruple the total population within the group to some 2 billion people. China’s government has promised to increase imports of goods but faces complaints it is failing to carry out promises made when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 to open finance and other service industries. China is also a member of various other trading arrangements, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which includes many nations in Asia that are not part of the CPTPP.

Guangzhou FC coach steps down

GUANGZHOU, China (AP) — Fabio Cannavaro has left his position as coach of troubled Chinese powerhouse Guangzhou FC, the club announced in late September. Cannavaro, who was captain of Italy’s World Cup winning team in 2006, started his second spell in charge of Guangzhou in 2017 and delivered the Chinese Super League title two years later. But the 48-year-old former Juventus and Real Madrid defender did not return to China last week, leading to speculation about his future with the club, which is owned by Evergrande. The embattled real estate company is struggling to avoid a default on billions of dollars of debt. “We would like to thank Fabio Cannavaro for all of his effort and contribution to Guangzhou and wish him all the best in the future,” the club said in a statement on its website. Cannavaro coached the team to second-place finishes in 2018 and 2020.



SENIOR SISTERS. This combination of two undated photos released by Guinness World Records show sisters Umeno Sumiyama, left, and Koume Kodama at separate nursing homes in Shodoshima island, left, and Oita prefecture, Japan. The two Japanese twin sisters were certified by Guinness World Records as the world’s oldest living identical twins, at 107 years and 300 days old, as of September 1, 2021, the organization said. (Guinness World Records via AP)

Japanese sisters certified as world’s oldest twins at 107

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Guinness World Records has certified two Japanese sisters as the world’s oldest living identical twins at age 107, in an announcement coinciding with Respect for the Aged Day, a national holiday in Japan.

Umeno Sumiyama and Koume Kodama were born the third and fourth of 11 siblings on Shodoshima island in western Japan on November 5, 1913.

They were separated after elementary school, when Kodama was sent to work as a maid in Oita on Japan’s southern main island of Kyushu. She later married there, while Sumiyama remained on the island where they grew up and had her own family.

The sisters later recalled their difficult younger days. Growing up, they said they were bullied because of prejudice against children of multiple births in Japan.

Busy with their own lives for decades, the sisters rarely met until they turned 70, when

Turkmenistan marks 30th independence anniversary

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan (AP) — Turkmenistan marked the 30th anniversary of its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union with a military parade that involved thousands of people and featured the country’s leader mounting a horse to greet the participants.

The pomp-filled parade took place in Ashgabat, the capital of the gas-rich former Soviet republic in Central Asia. President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov personally saluted the parade — first from an open-top car and then from a horse he rode across the square.

The event was organized with strict

precautions. All foreign guests, including foreign diplomats stationed in Turkmenistan, had to undergo coronavirus testing to attend and watched the parade from socially distanced seats. Neither Berdimukhamedov nor those marching in the parade wore masks, however.

Turkmenistan has not reported any coronavirus cases, but has introduced a series of restrictive measures to prevent the infection and made vaccination mandatory for all starting from age 18.

Aside from troops and military equipment, the parade featured employees of state

they started making pilgrimages together to some of the 88 Shikoku temples and enjoyed being reconnected. Sumiyama and Kodama were 107 years and 300 days old as of September 1, breaking the previous record set by famous Japanese sisters Kin Narita and Gin Kanie at 107 years and 175 days, Guinness World Records Ltd. said in a statement.

Their families told Guinness that the sisters often joked about outliving the earlier record holders, affectionately known as “Kin-san, Gin-san,” who attained idol-like status in the late 1990s for both their age and humor.

About 29% of the population of 125 million in Japan, the world’s fastest aging nation, are 65 years or older, according to the health and welfare ministry. About 86,510 of them are centenarians — half of whom turned 100 this year.

Due to coronavirus precautions, the certificates for their record were mailed to the separate nursing homes where they now live, and Sumiyama accepted hers with tears of happiness, according to Guinness.

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Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 10/01

Bangladesh Taka	85.43
Cambodian Riel	4.095
China Renminbi	6.4452
Fijian Dollar	2.0947
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7855
Indian Rupee	74.195
Indonesian Rupiah	14259
Iranian Rial	42025
Japanese Yen	111.05
Laos New Kip	9970.9
Malaysian Ringgit	4.178
Nepal Rupee	119.2
Pakistani Rupee	169.75
Papua N.G. Kina	3.51
Philippine Peso	50.74
Russian Ruble	72.74
Saudi Riyal	3.7503
Singapore Dollar	1.356
South Korean Won	1182.0
Sri Lankan Rupee	199.78
Taiwan Dollar	27.82
Thai Baht	33.64
Vietnam Dong	22759