

Rat who detected landmines in Cambodia dies in retirement

By **Sopheng Cheang**
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — A landmine-detecting rat in Cambodia who received a prestigious award for his life-saving duty has died in retirement, the charity for which he had worked has announced.



EXPLOSIVE CAREER. A landmine-detecting rat in Cambodia who received a prestigious award for his life-saving duty has died in retirement, the charity for which he had worked has announced. Magawa, an African giant pouched rat, passed away in January, according to an announcement on the website of APOPO, a Belgium-headquartered nonprofit group. The organization trains rats and dogs to sniff out landmines and tuberculosis. (Photo/People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, via AP)

Magawa, an African giant pouched rat, passed away in January, according to an announcement on the website of APOPO, a Belgium-headquartered nonprofit group. The organization trains rats and dogs to sniff out landmines and tuberculosis.

"All of us at APOPO are feeling the loss of Magawa and we are grateful for the incredible work he's done," the announcement said. Magawa was born in November 2013 in Tanzania, where APOPO maintains its operational headquarters and training and breeding center. He was sent to Cambodia in 2016.

The death of Magawa was announced a day after three mine removal experts working for another group were killed by an accidental explosion of an anti-tank mine in Cambodia's northern province of Preah Vihear. Almost three decades of civil war that ended in 1998 left Cambodia littered with landmines and other unexploded ordnance that continues to kill and maim.

APOPO's office in Cambodia posted condolences for the three dead and one wounded from the Cambodia Self Help Demining group.

According to APOPO, Magawa detected more than 100 landmines and other explosives during his five-year career before retiring last year.

"His contribution allows communities in

Cambodia to live, work, and play without fear of losing life or limb," said the group. In 2020, the rat also won a gold medal from the Britain-based People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, considered the highest award for gallantry an animal can receive.

African giant pouched rats are believed to be especially well-suited for landmine clearance because their small size lets them walk across mine fields without triggering the explosives.

In retirement in Cambodia's northwestern province of Siem Reap, Magawa was housed in his usual cage, and fed the same food — mostly fresh fruit and vegetables — that sustained him during his active career. To keep him trim, he was released for 20 to 30 minutes a day into a larger cage with facilities such as a sandbox and a running wheel. His death at 8 years of age was not unusual for the species.



DELIGHTFUL DEBUT. Japanese-born twin pandas Xiao Xiao, top, and Lei Lei, bottom, are seen together at the Ueno Zoo in Tokyo on January 12, 2022. The twin panda cubs made their first public appearance before their devoted fans but only briefly — three days — due to the upsurge of the highly transmissible coronavirus omicron variant. (Tokyo Zoological Park Society via AP)

Twin panda cubs debut at Tokyo zoo, woo devoted fans

By **Mari Yamaguchi**
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Twin panda cubs made their first public appearance last month before devoted fans in Tokyo, but they were on display only briefly — three days — due to a spike in COVID-19 cases driven by the omicron variant.

The twins, male cub Xiao Xiao and its sister Lei Lei, which were born at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in June, took their first steps as beaming fans held up their smartphones to film the cuddly pair as they played together.

In a video released by the zoo, the twin cubs sit back to back on a tree playing with bamboo while visitors can be heard saying

"kawaii (cute)!" in the background. Then the male cub steps on its sister to move up the tree.

"My heart thumped with excitement when I first saw them," said Kirie Tanaka, an avid panda fan who came from the western Japanese city of Osaka for the day.

During her turn, the cubs were pretending to eat bamboo and "that was just adorable," said Tanaka, whose hat and bag were decorated with panda-motif ornaments. "It's so comforting to see them."

The twins, which were palm-sized pink creatures when they were born, now weigh as much as a toddler each and have developed black-and-white fur. They enjoy climbing trees and playing together on the

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Preventive care for children is more important than ever

Get the vaccines, checkups and dental care your children need. Having a checkup with their physical and dental care providers will help make sure they stay healthy. While you're at it, make sure their vaccines are up to date so they are protected — **see the chart below for what vaccines kids ages birth to 6 years need.** Regular physical and dental checkups and keeping vaccines current can help prevent problems before they arise.

Recommended vaccines for children: Birth to 6 years

Vaccine	birth	months								years		
		1	2	4	6	12	15	18	24	4	5	6
Chickenpox (varicella)							1st					2nd
DTaP (diphtheria)			1st	2nd	3rd			4th				5th
Hib (H.flu bacteria)			1st	2nd	3rd		4th					
Hepatitis A							1st and 2nd (at least 6 months apart)					
Hepatitis B	1st	2nd				3rd						
Flu (influenza)							yearly					
MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)							1st				2nd	
Pneumococcal (PCV)			1st	2nd	3rd	4th						
Polio (IPV)			1st	2nd		3rd					4th	
Rotavirus (RV)			1st	2nd	3rd							

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