



## Sri Lanka returns last of unwanted waste shipments to U.K.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka has sent back the last of 263 shipping containers of waste from Britain, according to an official, as developing nations look to block the import of refuse and other environmentally hazardous items from wealthier countries. Customs officials in the South Asian country identified the large shipment of waste two years ago, including mattresses, carpets, and springs, which the local importers claimed were for recycling. Deputy environmental chief Ajith Weerasundara said the last 45 containers were sent out of the country last month. Sri Lanka is party to the Basel Convention which controls transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal, especially in developing nations. Weerasundara said authorities will stay vigilant to prevent disposal of waste in the country. Many countries in Southeast Asia have been resisting trash exports from developed nations in recent years. In 2020, Malaysia repatriated 150 containers of waste mainly to developed countries after they had been rerouted there following a Chinese ban on plastic waste.

## Russia suspended from international soccer over Ukraine war

GENEVA (AP) — Russian teams have been suspended from all international soccer, including qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup, as Moscow was pushed toward pariah status in sports for its invasion of Ukraine. World soccer body FIFA and European authority UEFA banned Russian national and club teams from their competitions “until further notice.” Russia’s men’s national team had been scheduled to play in World Cup qualifying playoffs in a couple weeks. “Football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine,” FIFA and UEFA said in a joint statement. The high-level punishment involving sports and politics — something not seen for decades — came after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) pushed dozens of sports governing bodies to exclude Russian athletes and officials from international events. The IOC said this action was needed to “protect the integrity of global sports competitions and for the safety of all the participants.” Denying Russia a place on the international stage could deliver a financial and psychological blow to the country, along with tarnishing its image as an elite sports powerhouse. Russia now faces the kind of isolation suffered by Yugoslavian teams in 1992 after war broke out in the Balkans and by South African teams and athletes during the apartheid era of racial segregation and discrimination.

## Hong Kong requires vaccines for restaurants, stores

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong has launched a vaccination requirement to enter shopping malls, restaurants, and a host of other places as it battles an expanding omicron outbreak and tries to overcome vaccine hesitancy in parts of its population. Businesses posted a QR code at their entrances for people to scan with a smartphone app to check their vaccine status before entering. Everyone age 12 and older must have at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to enter these places. Beginning April 30, those age 18 and above will be required to have two doses. Booster shots will be required for some starting June 30.

## North Korea says it tested cameras for spy satellite

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea says it tested cameras to be installed on a spy satellite, a suggestion that it’ll likely soon conduct a banned long-range rocket launch to modernize its weapons arsenal and apply more pressure on the Biden administration. The United Nations and others view the North’s space launch development project as a cover for tests of missile technology, as ballistic missiles and rockets in satellite launches share similar bodies, engines, and other technology. Concerns about a North Korean satellite launch flared after it recently threatened to lift a four-year moratorium on big weapons tests to cope with what it called U.S. hostility. U.S., South Korean, and Japanese officials said they detected a new ballistic missile launch by North Korea, the eighth of its kind this year.

## Cash-strapped Sri Lanka appeals to expats to send money

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka celebrated its Independence Day last month with an appeal by the president to the country’s expatriates to send money home as it struggles with the worst economic crisis in decades mainly due to depleted foreign reserves. Sri Lankans are facing shortages of milk powder, cooking gas, kerosene, and other essentials. Cash shortages have hindered imports of raw materials for manufacturing and worsened inflation, which surged to 12.1% in December. The pandemic has dealt a heavy blow to an economy that depends heavily on tourism and trade, with the government estimating a loss of \$14 billion over the last two years. The economy is estimated to have contracted by 1.5% in July-September 2021, according to the central bank. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said Sri Lankans abroad who sent foreign currency back home are a major resource. “I invite all expatriate Sri Lankans to invest in their homeland,” he said in an address during a ceremony marking Independence Day in the capital, Colombo. A colorful military parade followed his speech. Data shows that overseas remittances — the nation’s main foreign exchange earner — have fallen by nearly 60% to \$812 million in December from a year earlier. For the whole year, remittances declined 22% to \$5.4 billion. The drop came after the government ordered the mandatory conversion of foreign currency and exchange rate controls. Because of the currency shortage, importers are unable to clear their cargo and manufacturers are unable to buy raw materials from overseas. Sri Lanka has borrowed heavily and faces repayments on \$15 billion in international sovereign bonds. Officials have said the government is gradually building back reserves to ensure it can honor its debts.



**REPTILE RESCUE.** Rescuers hold a crocodile after removing a tire from its neck, in Palu, Central Sulawesi, on February 7, 2022. The wild crocodile with a used motorcycle tire stuck around its neck for six years was finally freed by an Indonesian bird catcher in a tireless effort that wildlife conservation officials hailed as a milestone. (AP Photo/Mohammad Taufan)

# Indonesia frees croc from tire stuck on its neck for six years

By **Mohammad Taufan**  
The Associated Press

**P**ALU, Indonesia — A wild crocodile with a used motorcycle tire stuck around its neck for six years has finally been freed by an Indonesian bird catcher in a tireless effort that wildlife conservation officials hailed as a milestone.

The 14.8-foot saltwater female crocodile has become an icon to the people in Palu, the capital city of Central Sulawesi. The beast was seen on the city’s river with the tire around its neck becoming increasingly tighter, running the risk of choking her.

Conservation officials were racing to rescue the crocodile since residents spotted the reptile in 2016, generating sympathy among residents and worldwide. In 2020, Australian crocodile wrangler Matthew Wright and American wildlife biologist Forrest Galante tried and failed to free the reptile.

In early January, 35-year-old bird catcher and trader Tili, who recently moved to the city, heard about the famous crocodile from his neighbors and became determined to rescue the reptile after he saw her frequently sunbathing at a nearby estuary.

“I have experiences and skills in catching animals, not only birds, but farm animals that are released from the cage,” Tili, who goes by a single name, told The Associated Press. “I believe I can rescue the crocodile with my skills.”

He strung ropes of various sizes into a trap tied to a tree near the river, and laid chickens,

ducks, and birds as bait. After three weeks of waiting and several failed attempts, the crocodile finally fell into the trap one evening. With the help of two of his friends, Tili pulled the trapped crocodile ashore and sawed through the tire, which was 1.6 feet in diameter.

A video that circulated widely on the internet showed a crowd cheering nearby as Tili and his friends broke the crocodile free. Other residents then contacted firefighters and a wildlife conservation agency to help them release the animal back into the wild.

“For all of the efforts Tili has done for protected wildlife and being the kind of animal lover he is, that’s a great milestone,” said Haruna Hamma who heads Central Sulawesi province’s conservation agency.

He said it was unclear how a used motorcycle tire got stuck around the crocodile’s neck. Conservationists have said that it was likely deliberately placed by people in a failed attempt to trap it as a pet or skin it for sale, but crocodiles and other swimming reptiles often travel into garbage-studded waters with nothing to stop a tire from encircling them, Hamma said.

Government data recorded 279 crocodile attacks in Indonesia, the world’s largest archipelago nation with more than 17,000 islands, between 2007 and 2014. Of these, as many as 268 cases of attacks were carried out by saltwater crocodiles, of which 135 were fatal.

Despite the attacks, the saltwater crocodile is protected under Indonesian law.

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## Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 3/04

Bangladesh Taka	85.82
Cambodian Riel	4083.1
China Renminbi	6.3188
Fijian Dollar	2.0964
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8132
Indian Rupee	76.423
Indonesian Rupiah	14351
Iranian Rial	42292
Japanese Yen	114.71
Laos New Kip	11511
Malaysian Ringgit	4.176
Nepal Rupee	122.32
Pakistani Rupee	177.25
Papua N.G. Kina	3.521
Philippine Peso	52.014
Russian Ruble	117.25
Saudi Riyal	3.7518
Singapore Dollar	1.3612
South Korean Won	1219.5
Sri Lankan Rupee	202.44
Taiwan Dollar	28.154
Thai Baht	32.69
Vietnam Dong	22832