



Man in Japan gambles COVID town funds

TOKYO (AP) — The money was supposed to be COVID-19 assistance for low-income households in a small Japanese town, but it was mistakenly wired to the bank account of a resident who refused to return it and spent most of it on online gambling, police said. Sho Taguchi, a 24-year-old jobless resident in the town of Abu in western Japan, was arrested in May, Yamaguchi prefectural police said. Police said he admitted to spending most of the 46.3 million yen (\$360,000) of taxpayers' money on gambling. According to Kyodo News agency, only 68,000 yen (\$530) is left in his bank account after he withdrew the money 34 times in just over 10 days after the town made the mistake. He's being held on suspicion of computer fraud. Taguchi had allegedly refused the town request to return the money, police said. The funds were COVID-19 subsidies that were deposited into his bank account in April. Each of the 463 low-income households in Abu, population 3,372, was supposed to receive 100,000 yen (\$780). But a town official mistakenly submitted to a financial institution a single transfer request of the total amount to Taguchi, whose name was the first on the list of recipients, Kyodo News reported. Town officials are separately investigating how the erroneous transfer went through unnoticed, a mistake that has triggered a wave of criticism from residents. Abu mayor Norihiko Hanada told reporters that the arrest is a step toward tracing the money and hoped it is recovered in full. Taguchi's arrest was based on his alleged transfer of 4 million yen (\$31,300) of the town money paid into an account believed to be an online gambling site.

Indian couple longing for grandchild sues son, his wife

NEW DELHI (AP) — A retired Indian couple is suing their son and daughter-in-law, demanding that they produce a grandchild within a year or pay them 50 million rupees (\$675,000). Sanjeev Ranjan Prasad, a 61-year-old retired government officer, said it was an emotional and sensitive issue for him and his wife, Sadhana Prasad, and they cannot wait any longer. His son, a pilot, was married six years ago. "We want a grandson or a granddaughter within a year or compensation, because I have spent my life's earnings on my son's education," Prasad told reporters. Prasad said he spent 3.5 million rupees (\$47,300) for his son's pilot training in the United States. "The main issue is that at this age we need a grandchild, but these people (my son and daughter-in-law) have an attitude that they don't think about us," Prasad said. "We got him married in the hope we would have the pleasure of becoming grandparents. It has been six years since their marriage," Prasad said. "It feels as if despite having everything we have nothing." The son and daughter-in-law could not be reached for comment. Prasad said he and his wife love children. "We are not getting love and affection from where we want it the most," he said. "I feel very unlucky."

Airbnb ends rentals in China to focus on outbound tourists

BEIJING (AP) — Airbnb Inc. has announced it will stop representing short-term rental properties in China and focus its business in the country on serving Chinese tourists looking for lodgings abroad. Airbnb joins a series of foreign internet companies including Yahoo Inc. and eBay Inc. that pulled out of China after running into fierce local competition and regulatory barriers. "We have made the difficult decision to refocus our efforts in China on outbound travel and suspend our homes and Experiences of Hosts in China, starting from July 30, 2022," said the chief strategy officer of Airbnb China, Nathan Blecharczyk, in a statement on its social media account. Landlords represented by Airbnb have had more than 25 million guest arrivals since 2016, according to Blecharczyk's statement. The Chinese government has blocked foreign tourists from visiting since the pandemic hit in early 2020 and has told the Chinese public to avoid foreign travel that isn't essential for business or study.

Duterte hits Putin: I kill criminals, not children, elders

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Outgoing Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte sharply criticized Russian leader Vladimir Putin for the killings of innocent civilians in Ukraine, saying while the two of them have been tagged as killers, "I kill criminals, I don't kill children and the elderly." Duterte, who openly calls Putin an idol and a friend, voiced his rebuke for the first time over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in remarks aired in late May, where he blamed the three-month old war for the spike in global oil prices that has battered many countries, including the Philippines. While stressing he was not condemning the Russian president, Duterte disagreed with Putin's labelling of the invasion as a "special military operation," and said it was really a full-scale war waged against "a sovereign nation." "Many say that Putin and I are both killers. I've long told you Filipinos that I really kill. But I kill criminals, I don't kill children and the elderly," Duterte said in a televised weekly meeting with key cabinet officials. "We're in two different worlds." Duterte, who steps down on June 30 when his turbulent six-year term ends, has presided over a brutal anti-drugs crackdown that has left more than 6,000 mostly petty suspects dead. Human rights groups have cited much higher casualties and say innocent people, including children, have been killed in the campaign that Duterte vows to continue up to his last day in office. The unprecedentedly massive drug campaign killings have sparked an investigation by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity. Duterte has said he expects to face more lawsuits arising from the drug deaths when his presidency ends. Duterte and his police officials have denied sanctioning extrajudicial killings in the campaign against illegal drugs but have openly threatened drug suspects with death and made an unsuccessful attempt to reimpose the death penalty in the largest Roman Catholic nation in Asia to deter drug dealers and other criminals.



FAR OUT-HOUSE. A man leaves a public restroom that was designed by architect Tadao Ando in Tokyo, on May 11, 2022. Wim Wenders is making a film about beatified Japanese toilets that will have what the German director calls "social meaning" about people in modern cities. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

Wenders making a film about fancy public restrooms in Japan

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Wim Wenders is making a film about high-end public toilets in Japan that will have what the renowned German director calls "social meaning" about people in modern cities.

"My first reaction was, I must admit: What? Toilets? Chotto mattene," he said, using the Japanese expression for "wait a minute."

But then he began to see what the story could be about.

"For me, they turned from toilets into restrooms. That's a very nice word in English, the restroom. When I saw these places the next couple of days, I realized they were restrooms in the true sense of the word," Wenders told reporters in Tokyo's fashionable Shibuya district, where the dozen public restrooms are located.

The facilities were designed by leading architects including Kengo Kuma and Tadao Ando, with the idea that a pleasant public restroom could counter the common expectation it had to be filthy, filled with graffiti, or associated with crime.

Wenders, the Oscar-nominated director of *Wings of Desire* and *Buena Vista Social Club*, said when he saw the Shibuya bathrooms, he was moved.

"This is a truly precious place," Wenders said.

And so his film's hero will be a sanitation worker who cleans the toilets, seeing his job as

a craft and a service for the people. Details of the script are still being worked out.

Koji Yakusho, known for playing the Japanese everyman in works like *Shall We Dance* and *Babel*, said he accepted the role as soon as it was offered because he wanted to work with Wenders.

"I have a feeling it's going to be a beautiful story. And I feel a story that has the toilet as the setting, with the person who works there and the people who use it, will help lead to an understanding of Japan," said Yakusho.

The Tokyo Toilet project was initially conceived to impress foreign visitors expected for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, before the coronavirus pandemic forced the events to take place without spectators in the stands.

The public restroom designed by Ando is round with frames for the exterior walls, to allow air to circulate. In real life it gets cleaned without water to avoid mold or decay by men in blue jumpsuits by Japanese fashion designer Nigo.

The project, including Wenders' film, has the backing of Fast Retailing, the company behind the Uniqlo clothing chain, and The Nippon Foundation, which carries out humanitarian projects using revenue from boat racing.

Wenders said his film, despite its humble setting, will explore a profound concept.

"I almost think it's a utopian idea because the toilet is a place where everybody is the same. There is no rich or poor, old or young. Everyone is part of humanity," he said.



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Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 6/03

Bangladesh Taka	88.91
Cambodian Riel	4033.8
China Renminbi	6.6596
Fijian Dollar	2.1115
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8453
Indian Rupee	77.592
Indonesian Rupiah	14370
Iranian Rial	42097
Japanese Yen	130.72
Laos New Kip	13590
Malaysian Ringgit	4.387
Nepal Rupee	124.38
Pakistani Rupee	197.2
Papua N.G. Kina	3.52
Philippine Peso	52.933
Russian Ruble	61.375
Saudi Riyal	3.7507
Singapore Dollar	1.3751
South Korean Won	1248.9
Sri Lankan Rupee	358.49
Taiwan Dollar	29.341
Thai Baht	34.35
Vietnam Dong	23165