



## China launches lab modules to join space station

BEIJING (AP) — China has launched one of two laboratory modules to complete its permanent orbiting space station. The Wentian was launched from tropical Hainan Island with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching. Designed for science and biology experiments, the module lifted off on the Long March 5B remote 3 rocket, and spent roughly eight minutes in flight before it entered orbit, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. A second lab module, called the Mengtian, is due to be launched in October, and both will join the Tiangong space station. Three astronauts are already living in the core module and will oversee the arrival and docking of the lab. The launch is the third since the Chinese space station entered its construction phase. It was preceded by the Tianzhou-class cargo spacecraft and the Shenzhou-14 crewed spacecraft. China's space program is run by the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, prompting the U.S. to exclude it from the International Space Station. As a result, China largely had to work on its own in its Tiangong space station program, building and then abandoning two experimental stations before embarking on the latest iteration. The 23-ton lab module is heavier than any other single-module spacecraft that is currently in space, according to the state-owned *Global Times*. China's space program launched its first astronaut into orbit in 2003, making it only the third country to do so on its own after the former Soviet Union and the U.S.

## India expresses deep concern about Myanmar executions

NEW DELHI (AP) — India has expressed "deep concern" at Myanmar's executions of four political prisoners. This was India's first reaction to the executions carried out in July. All were tried, convicted, and sentenced by a military tribunal with no access to appeal. India supports the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' efforts to bring peace to Myanmar, which has been rocked by civil unrest and widespread fighting since the military seized power from an elected government in February 2021. "We have noted these developments (executions) with deep concern. As a neighboring country, we have always highlighted the need for a peaceful resolution to the issue. The rule of law and democratic process must be upheld," said a statement by External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi. "As a friend of the people of Myanmar, we will continue to support Myanmar's return to democracy and stability," he said. India and Myanmar share a long land border of over 1,000 miles and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. The proximity of the two countries has helped Myanmar become a key partner in India's fight in the remote northeast against dozens of ethnic insurgent groups whose demands range from independent homelands to maximum autonomy within India. India and Myanmar in recent years have signed defense cooperation agreements committing to peace and stability in border areas, and they promised to not allow anyone to use their respective soil for hostile activities against the other side.

## Malaysia seizes African tusks, pangolin scales worth \$18M

PORT KLANG, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian authorities say they seized a container of African elephant tusks, pangolin scales, and other animal skulls and bones estimated to be worth 80 million ringgit (\$18 million). The Customs Department said in a statement that it discovered the contraband hidden behind sawn timber following checks on July 10 on a ship coming from Africa. This included 13,227 pounds of elephant tusks, 220 pounds of pangolin scales, 55 pounds of rhino horns, and 661 pounds of animal skulls, bones, and horns, it said. Investigations are ongoing on the importer and shipping agent, the department said without providing further details. It was unclear if the container was meant to be shipped to other parts of Asia. Ivory tusks, rhino horns, and pangolin scales are believed to have medicinal properties and are in high demand in the region.

## Micronesia's first COVID-19 outbreak balloons

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Micronesia's first outbreak in late July of COVID-19 grew in one week to more than 1,000 cases, causing alarm in the Pacific island nation. Micronesia likely became the final nation in the world with a population of more than 100,000 to experience an outbreak of the disease, after avoiding it for 2 1/2 years thanks to its geographic isolation and border controls. Health officials said cases were rapidly increasing. Eight people had been hospitalized and one older man died, officials said. Many top lawmakers and senior officials have caught the disease, including Vice President Yosiwo George, who was hospitalized, officials said. They said the vice president's condition was improving. Camille Movick, whose family owns Fusion Restaurant in Pohnpei State, told The Associated Press that a lot of people have been posting on Facebook asking, for instance, that others stay away from their homes. "Initially there was quite a bit of panic and worry with most people," she said. She said her restaurant remained open although business was slow because many people were afraid to dine in. She said some other restaurants had closed their dining rooms and were only offering takeout services. Movick said authorities had issued a directive that all people must wear masks in public — even outdoors — and that they faced fines of \$1,000 for noncompliance. She said one positive outcome was the outbreak had prompted many previously unvaccinated people to get their shots. She said many people suspected the virus might have been circulating before the first community case was confirmed because health authorities weren't routinely testing patients for the disease. Last year, Micronesia became one of the few countries to impose a broad mandate requiring all eligible citizens get vaccinated against the coronavirus. The government threatened to withhold federal funds from any individuals or business owners who didn't follow the rules. Health officials late last month had said 75% of people age five and older were fully vaccinated.



**MONKEY MAYHEM.** This image taken from a video shows a monkey loitering around a home in Yamaguchi, Japan, on July 23, 2022. People in the southwestern Japanese city have come under attack from monkeys that are trying to snatch babies, biting and clawing at flesh, and sneaking into nursery schools. (Twitter via AP)

## Japanese city alarmed by biting, clawing, attacking monkeys

By Yuri Kageyama  
The Associated Press

TOKYO — People in a southwestern Japanese city have come under attack from monkeys that are trying to snatch babies, biting and clawing at flesh, and sneaking into nursery schools.

The attacks — on 58 people since July 8 — are getting so bad that Yamaguchi city hall hired a special unit to hunt the animals with tranquilizer guns.

The monkeys aren't interested in food, so traps haven't worked. They have targeted mostly children and the elderly.

"They are so smart, and they tend to sneak up and attack from behind, often grabbing at your legs," city official Masato Saito said last week.

When confronted by a monkey, the instructions are: Do not look them in the eye, make yourself look as big as possible, such as by spreading open your coat, then back away as quietly as possible without making sudden moves, according to Saito.

A woman was assaulted by a monkey while hanging laundry on her veranda. Another victim showed bandaged toes. They were taken aback and frightened by how big and fat the monkeys were.

The monkeys terrorizing the community are Japanese macaque, the kind often pictured peacefully bathing in hot springs.

One male monkey, measuring 1.6 foot in height and weighing 15 pounds, was caught by the team with the tranquilizer gun. It was judged by various evidence to be one of the attacking monkeys and put to death.

But more attacks were reported after the capture.

No one has been seriously injured so far. But all have been advised to get hospital treat-

ment. Ambulances were called in some cases.

Although Japan is industrialized and urban, a fair portion of land in the archipelago is mountains and forests. Rare attacks on people by a bear, boars, or other wildlife have occurred, but generally not by monkeys.

No one seems to know why the attacks have occurred, and where exactly the troop of monkeys came from remains unclear.

"I have never seen anything like this my entire life," Saito said.

## 28 people dead, 60 sick in India from drinking spiked liquor

By Ajit Solanki  
The Associated Press

AHMEDABAD, India — At least 28 people have died and 60 others became ill from drinking altered liquor in western India, according to officials.

Senior government official Mukesh Parmar said the deaths occurred in Ahmedabad and Botad districts of Gujarat state, where the manufacture, sale, and consumption of liquor are prohibited. It was not immediately known what chemical was used to alter the liquor.

Ashish Gupta, Gujarat state's police chief, said several suspected bootleggers who were involved in selling the spiked alcohol have been detained.

Deaths from illegally brewed alcohol are common in India, where illicit liquor is cheap and often spiked with chemicals such as pesticides to increase potency.

Illicit liquor has also become a hugely profitable industry across India, where bootleggers pay no taxes and sell enormous quantities of their product to the poor at a cheap rate. In 2020, at least 120 people died after drinking tainted liquor in India's northern Punjab state.

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## Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 7/29

Bangladesh Taka	94.53
Cambodian Riel	4,099.6
China Renminbi	6.7439
Fijian Dollar	2.1911
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8499
Indian Rupee	79.315
Indonesian Rupiah	14820
Iranian Rial	42290
Japanese Yen	133.37
Laos New Kip	15005
Malaysian Ringgit	4.448
Nepal Rupee	126.77
Pakistani Rupee	239.7
Papua N.G. Kina	3.522
Philippine Peso	55.33
Russian Ruble	61.0
Saudi Riyal	3.7558
Singapore Dollar	1.3826
South Korean Won	1306.0
Sri Lankan Rupee	358.46
Taiwan Dollar	30.034
Thai Baht	36.34
Vietnam Dong	23342