



Escaped king cobra crawls back to Swedish terrarium

HELSINKI (AP) — A venomous 7-foot king cobra that escaped from its home in a Swedish zoo returned back home by itself, bringing a happy ending to over a weeklong disappearance saga. “Houdini, as we named him, has crawled back into his terrarium,” CEO Jonas Wahlstrom of the Skansen Aquarium told the Swedish public broadcaster SVT. The deadly snake, whose official name is Sir Vass (Sir Hiss), escaped October 22 via a light fixture in the ceiling of its glass enclosure at the aquarium, part of the zoo at the Skansen open-air museum and park on Stockholm’s Djurgarden island. As a result of an intensive search with x-ray machines, “Houdini” was located in a confined space near the terrarium in the insulation between two walls. Holes were drilled into the walls where the snake was hiding but the cobra disappeared from the view of the x-ray cameras. It turned out the snake gave up its freedom ride and crawled back to its terrarium. “It was too stressful for Houdini with all the holes in the walls, so he wanted to go home,” Wahlstrom told SVT. The park said the snake wouldn’t have survived the cold climate if it had gotten out of the building. King cobras can grow up to 18 feet long and mainly live in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Dubai fire races up high-rise near world’s tallest building

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A fire broke out November 6 at a 35-story high-rise building in Dubai near the Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest building. It wasn’t immediately clear if there were any injuries in the blaze at the apartment building, which had been extinguished by the time an Associated Press journalist reached the site. Black char marks from the blaze could be seen stretching up the building that’s part of a series of towers called 8 Boulevard Walk by Emaar, the state-backed developer in the emirate. A series of fires in tall buildings in skyscraper-studded Dubai in recent years has revived questions about the safety of cladding and other materials used in the country. On New Year’s Eve in 2015, a blaze raced through the Address Downtown, one of the most upscale hotels and residences in Dubai near the Burj Khalifa.

Toyota making cars again in Myanmar after coup delay

BANGKOK (AP) — Toyota Motor Corp. began assembling autos last month in Myanmar after more than a year delay following a military takeover in February 2021. The factory in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, outside Yangon, the country’s biggest city, is owned by Toyota and its trading arm, Toyota Tsusho. The factory assembles Hilux pickup trucks from semi-knockdown kits and was originally due to make 2,500 vehicles a year, beginning in February 2021. Original plans called for an investment of \$52.6 million. In a statement, Toyota Myanmar said it began selling the Hilux double cab trucks in Myanmar and is taking more orders. It was unclear exactly when the factory began production. Many foreign companies have withdrawn from Myanmar following the military’s seizure of power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Toyota is among 100+ Japanese and other foreign companies with investments in Thilawa.

Women’s World Cup individual game tickets now on sale

NEW ZEALAND (AP) — Tickets to individual games for the 2023 Women’s World Cup in Australia and New Zealand went on general sale October 31. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) announced that fans from 100 countries have already secured tickets following a presale for Visa cardholders. Visa is a FIFA partner. Tickets for the matches start at just less than \$13.00 in U.S. currency, with children’s tickets starting at about half that. An expanded field of 32 teams will take part in soccer’s premier tournament, including the two-time defending champion United States. There will be 64 games across nine host cities and 10 stadiums, starting on July 20, 2023. The final is scheduled for August 20 at Stadium Australia in Sydney. The draw was held in Auckland last month. The final three teams in the field will be determined in an intercontinental playoff in February 2023.

Google discontinues Google Translate in mainland China

HONG KONG — Google has discontinued its Google Translate services in mainland China, removing one of the company’s few remaining services that it had provided in a country where most western social media platforms are blocked. The Google Translate app and website now display a generic search bar and a link redirecting Chinese users to its page in Hong Kong, which is blocked on the mainland. Users have reported not being able to access the service since early in October, according to Chinese social media posts. The translation feature built into the Google Chrome browser also no longer function for users in China. The Google Translate service was discontinued in China due to “low usage,” Google said in a statement. It is not clear how many users were using Google Translate in China. The U.S. technology firm has a fraught relationship with China. In 2010, Google pulled its search engine from the Chinese market after it became unwilling to abide by the country’s censorship rules. China later moved to block other Google services such as its e-mail service Gmail and Google Maps. Chinese authorities typically block most western social media platforms and services, including those of Google, Facebook, and Twitter as the government seeks to maintain strict censorship rules. Chinese platforms must abide strictly by those rules and censor keywords and topics the authorities deem politically sensitive. In 2017, Google made its translation service available on the mainland via a Chinese domain as it explored ways to offer services in the Chinese market. Its Google Translate service competed with other popular, homegrown translation alternatives provided by Chinese technology firms including Baidu and Sogou. Google explored launching a separate, censored search engine for China, but terminated the project in 2019 amid a global backlash.



MURKY METHODS. Made Partiana looks at sea urchins in a tank at the LINI center in Les, Bali, Indonesia, in this April 12, 2021 file photo. “I hope that (healthier) coral reefs will make it possible for the next generation of children and grandchildren under me,” Partiana says. He wants them to be able to “see what coral looks like and that there can be ornamental fish in the sea.” (AP Photo/Alex Lindbloom, File)

Sparkling fish, murky methods: the global aquarium trade

By Victoria Milko, Firdia Lisnawati, and Kathy Young
The Associated Press

LES, Indonesia — After diving into the warm sea off the coast of northern Bali, Indonesia, Made Partiana hovers above a bed of coral, holding his breath and scanning for flashes of color and movement. Hours later, exhausted, he returns to a rocky beach, towing plastic bags filled with his darting, exquisite quarry: tropical fish of all shades and shapes.

Millions of saltwater fish like these are caught in Indonesia and other countries every year to fill ever more elaborate aquariums in living rooms, waiting rooms, and restaurants around the world with vivid, otherworldly life.

“It’s just so much fun to just watch the antics between different varieties of fish,” said Jack Siravo, a Rhode Island fish enthusiast who began building aquariums after an accident paralyzed him and now has four saltwater tanks. He calls the fish “an endless source of fascination.”

But the long journey from places like Bali to places like Rhode Island is perilous for the fish and for the reefs they come from. Some are captured using squirts of cyanide to stun them. Many die along the way.

And even when they are captured carefully, by people like Partiana, experts say the global demand for these fish is contributing to the degradation of delicate coral ecosystems, especially in major export countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

There have been efforts to reduce some of the most destructive practices, such as cyanide fishing. But the trade is extraordinarily difficult to regulate and track as it stretches

from small-scale fishermen in tropical seaside villages through local middlemen, export warehouses, international trade hubs, and finally to pet stores in the U.S., China, Europe, and elsewhere.

“There’s no enforcement, no management, no data collection,” said Gayatri Rekso-dihardjo-Lilley, founder of LINI, a Bali-based nonprofit for the conservation and management of coastal marine resources.

That leaves enthusiasts like Siravo in the dark.

“Consumers often don’t know where their fish are coming from, and they don’t know how they are collected,” said Andrew Rhyne, a marine biology professor at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island.

Stunned by cyanide

Most ornamental saltwater fish species are caught in the wild because breeding them in captivity can be expensive, difficult, and often impossible. The conditions they need to reproduce are extremely particular and poorly understood, even by scientists and expert breeders who have been trying for years.

Small-scale collection and export of saltwater aquarium fish began in Sri Lanka in the 1930s and the trade has grown steadily since. Nearly 3 million homes in the U.S. keep saltwater fish as pets, according to a 2021-2022 American Pet Products Association survey. (Freshwater aquariums are far more common because freshwater fish are generally cheaper and easier to breed and care for.) About 7.6 million saltwater fish are imported into the U.S. every year.

For decades, a common fishing technique has involved cyanide, with dire consequences for fish and marine ecosystems.

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Fijian Dollar	2.2779
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8498
Indian Rupee	82.046
Indonesian Rupiah	15640
Iranian Rial	42025
Japanese Yen	147.06
Laos New Kip	16945
Malaysian Ringgit	4.746
Nepal Rupee	131.25
Pakistani Rupee	221.46
Papua N.G. Kina	3.521
Philippine Peso	58.414
Russian Ruble	61.2
Saudi Riyal	3.7575
Singapore Dollar	1.4072
South Korean Won	1405.2
Sri Lankan Rupee	366.8
Taiwan Dollar	32.002
Thai Baht	37.41
Vietnam Dong	24875