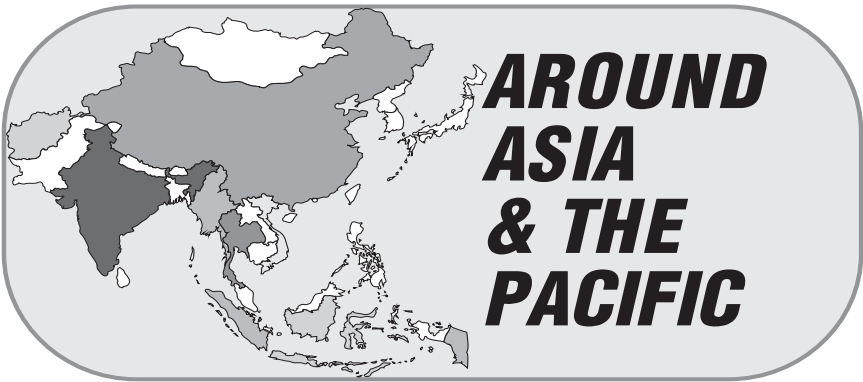




India to receive 12 cheetahs from South Africa

NEW DELHI (AP) — India will receive 12 cheetahs from South Africa that will join eight others it received from Namibia in September as part of an ambitious plan to reintroduce the cats in the country after 70 years. India plans to transport an additional 12 annually for the next eight to 10 years as part of an agreement signed by the two African countries, India’s Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change said. Cheetah populations in most countries are declining. South Africa, where the cats are running out of space, is an exception. South Africa’s National Biodiversity Institute, National Parks, the Cheetah Range Expansion Project, and the Endangered Wildlife Trust will collaborate with their Indian counterparts, the ministry said in a statement. The eight cheetahs flown from Namibia in September were released in sprawling Kuno National Park in central India. Cheetahs were once widespread in India but disappeared by 1952 because of hunting and loss of habitat. India hopes that importing African cheetahs will aid efforts to conserve the country’s threatened and largely neglected grasslands. There are fewer than 7,000 adult cheetahs in the wild globally, and they now inhabit less than 9% of their original range. Shrinking habitat, due to the increasing human population and climate change, is a huge threat.

Nepal plane crash black boxes sent to Singapore

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — The black boxes recovered from the January 15 plane crash in Nepal have been sent to Singapore for analysis to identify the cause of the crash that killed all 72 people on board, officials said. Both the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder will be examined by experts at Singapore’s Transportation Safety Investigation Bureau. The Nepal investigating team has sent the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder. The data will be downloaded and analyzed, according to Civil Aviation Authority spokesperson Rajendra Kumar K.C. It was initially suggested the black boxes be taken to France where the aircraft was manufactured, but Nepalese authorities decided to send the recorders to Singapore. A committee formed by the government is still looking into the cause of the Yeti Airlines flight crash. The twin-engine ATR 72-500 aircraft was approaching Pokhara International Airport in the Himalayan foothills when it plummeted into a gorge about one mile from the runway at an elevation of about 2,700 feet. While it’s still not clear what caused the crash, some aviation experts say video taken from the ground of the plane’s last moments indicated it went into a stall, although it’s unclear why. It was carrying 68 passengers, including 15 foreign nationals, as well as four crew members. The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina, and France. Nepal’s Civil Aviation Authority has also said the airport’s instrument landing system will not be working until February 26 — eight weeks after the airport began operations on January 1. Aviation safety experts have said the absence reflects the poor air safety record in Nepal, where mountainous terrain and the resulting variable weather conditions make flying difficult.

Maldives President Solih to run again after winning primary

MALE, Maldives (AP) — Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won a party primary and will run for a second term in September elections. Solih defeated Mohamed Nasheed, the parliament speaker and a former president, in the Maldivian Democratic Party primary. Nasheed played a key role in transforming the Indian Ocean archipelago state into a multiparty democracy after a 30-year autocracy. But Solih was named the party’s presidential candidate in 2018 in place of the more charismatic Nasheed after he failed to qualify because of a prison sentence. Since being elected, Solih has largely stabilized the nation despite political upheaval. Nasheed was elected president in the country’s first multiparty election in 2008 but resigned in 2012 amid public protests. He contested for presidency again in 2013 and lost, and became disqualified for the race five years later. Nasheed is known for liberal, pro-western views in the largely Sunni Muslim nation, famous for its high-end island resorts. He escaped an assassination attempt allegedly by a local group sympathetic to the Islamic State in 2021. Solih is the only one running for president so far. His main rival, former President Abdulla Yameen, is serving a prison term on charges of corruption and money laundering.

Nepal Supreme Court removes deputy PM over citizenship

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Nepal’s Supreme Court has removed the country’s deputy prime minister from office and from his parliamentary seat for violating citizenship laws. Rabi Lamichhane had become deputy prime minister and the powerful home minster after his newly formed party joined the coalition government. He was once a United States citizen but gave it up after returning to Nepal. The court ruled that after he took up U.S. citizenship he was no longer a Nepali national, and that after abandoning his American citizenship, he did not reapply for Nepali nationality. Therefore, it said, he improperly contested the election because of his invalid citizenship. Nepal does not allow dual citizenship. Lamichhane walked out of the government ministry and told reporters he welcomed the court decision. He said he was now without any citizenship and was unable to make any comments. There was no immediate comment from the government or the prime minister’s office. Lamichhane, a former television host, formed the National Independent Party with people who had no connections to political groups. The party won 20 seats in the November 20 election for the House of Representatives, the lower house of parliament.



LEISURELY LAGOMORPHS. A staff member feeds a rabbit at the Bunny Style Hotel in Hong Kong on January 18, 2023. In one of the world’s most densely populated cities, where most apartments range from small to miniscule, rabbits are popular pets. And when their owners are away, there are rabbit lovers ready to look after their lonely pets at Bunny Style, a luxury rabbit resort. In addition to feeding, hair-brushing, nail trimming, and exercising, some owners also order special vegetable cakes for their pets. (AP Photo/Anthony Kwan)

Hong Kong pet rabbits enjoy bunny resort while owners away

By Alice Fung and Karmen Li
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Rabbits scamper around a play area in a climate-controlled building in suburban Hong Kong, some climbing a castle made of wood while others explore a cotton tunnel.

In one of the world’s most densely populated cities, where most apartments range from small to miniscule, rabbits are popular pets.

And when their owners are away, there are rabbit lovers ready to look after their lonely pets at Bunny Style, a luxury rabbit resort.

That was especially evident last month as the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in Hong Kong spurred a surge in travel for the Lunar New Year to welcome the Year of the Rabbit.

Donna Li, the owner of Bunny Style, had said she was fully booked for the holiday and kept her charges happy with regular exercise, parties, spa treatments, and lots of hay.

“We aim to provide a secure environment,” Li said.

Li, who has two pet rabbits of her own, set up Bunny Style in June, starting with just a playroom offering space to hop and relief from Hong Kong’s hot, humid weather.

“To begin with, my idea was mainly about setting up a safe indoor play space with a suitable temperature for rabbits,” Li said.

As the government began lifting COVID-19 restrictions in September, Li sensed a need and swiftly set up boarding facilities. They were full over Christmas and Li has already begun taking bookings for Easter.

With 15 rabbits, Li and her staff were busy over the Lunar New Year holiday, the most

important in the Chinese calendar. Apart from feeding — some owners order special vegetable cakes in advance — there are hair-brushing, nail trimming, and exercising to be managed.

“I think rabbits understand what people say. They can sense whether we are being nice to them and look after them well,” Li said. “And so when I look after them, I talk to them a lot, telling them how beautiful and cute they are.”

A livestream and video clips are also provided, “so we knew that our rabbit was out actively hopping and enjoying itself,” said Rainbow Li, who found Bunny Style on the internet and boarded her rabbit while she and her partner travelled over Christmas.

Bunny Style charges about \$15 per night, including half an hour of supervised play time. Beauty treatments and special menu items are extra.

The animals’ popularity in Hong Kong has inevitably led to some owners finding they’ve bit off more than they can chew. For that, there are shelters such as Tolobunny, set up in 2015 and dedicated to finding new homes for abandoned rabbits, often at public adoption events.

Spokesperson Bridget Ng is already anticipating a surge of calls to the shelter’s 24-hour rescue hotline in the months after the new year. Already, its volunteers are temporarily housing 42 rabbits given up by their owners.

“Our observation is that throughout the year, especially at festive holidays like Valentine’s Day, Easter, or Christmas, there are more people who want to keep rabbits, but after a few months, there will be more aban-

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Artwork due: Thursday, March 30 at 1:00pm

Asian Currency Exchange Rates	
Units per U.S. dollar as of 2/03	
Bangladesh Taka	107.3
Cambodian Riel	4119.1
China Renminbi	6.7733
Fijian Dollar	2.1575
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8457
Indian Rupee	82.178
Indonesian Rupiah	14870
Iranian Rial	42197
Japanese Yen	130.92
Laos New Kip	16878
Malaysian Ringgit	4.256
Nepal Rupee	132.05
Pakistani Rupee	274.46
Papua N.G. Kina	3.52
Philippine Peso	53.645
Russian Ruble	70.671
Saudi Riyal	3.7524
Singapore Dollar	1.3202
South Korean Won	1243.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	364.99
Taiwan Dollar	29.891
Thai Baht	33.38
Vietnam Dong	23444