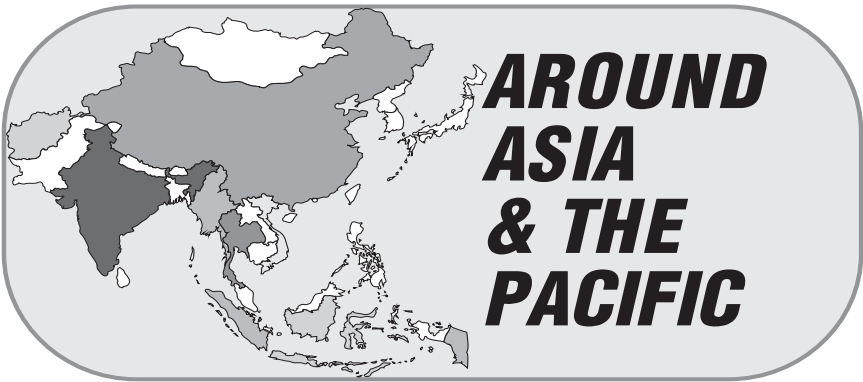




Apple pulls WhatsApp and Threads from App Store

HONG KONG (AP) — Apple said it removed Meta’s WhatsApp messaging app and its Threads social media app from the App Store in China to comply with orders from Chinese authorities. The apps were removed from the store after Chinese officials cited unspecified national security concerns. Their removal comes amid elevated tensions between the U.S. and China over trade, technology, and national security. The U.S. has threatened to ban TikTok over national security concerns. But while TikTok, owned by Chinese technology firm ByteDance, is used by millions in the U.S., apps like WhatsApp and Threads are not commonly used in China. Instead, the messaging app WeChat, owned by Chinese company Tencent, reigns supreme. Other Meta apps, including Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger, remained available for download, although use of such foreign apps is blocked in China due to its “Great Firewall” network of filters that restrict the use of foreign websites such as Google and Facebook. Apple, previously the world’s top smartphone maker, recently lost the top spot to Korean rival Samsung Electronics. The U.S. firm has run into headwinds in China, one of its top three markets, with sales slumping after Chinese government agencies and employees of state-owned companies were ordered not to bring Apple devices to work.

Prolonged heat wave forced students to stay home

MANILA, The Philippines — Southeast Asia was coping with a weekslong heat wave late last month as record-high temperatures led to school closings in several countries and urgent health warnings throughout the region. Millions of students in all public schools across the Philippines were ordered to stay home after authorities cancelled in-person classes for two days. The main advice for everyone, everywhere has been to avoid outdoor activities and drink plenty of water, but the young and the elderly were told to be especially careful. Cambodia this year is facing the highest temperatures in 170 years, Chan Yutha, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, told The Associated Press. His agency forecasted that temperatures in most parts of the country could reach up to 109° Fahrenheit. Myanmar’s meteorological department said that seven townships in the central Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, and Bago regions experienced record-high temperatures. Several towns in Myanmar were on lists of the hottest spots worldwide. Chauk township in Magway, historically the country’s hottest region, saw Myanmar’s highest temperature at 118.8° F, breaking the previous record of 117.3° F set in 1968. The Philippines is among the nations worst affected by the sweltering weather in Southeast Asia, where the intense tropical summer heat worsened by humidity forced class cancellations in recent weeks and sparked fears of water shortages, power outages, and damage to agricultural crops.

To fend off tourists, Japanese town is building a big screen

FUJIKAWAGUCHIKO, Japan (AP) — The town of Fujikawaguchiko has had enough of tourists. Known for a number of scenic photo spots that offer a near-perfect shot of Japan’s iconic Mount Fuji, the town has begun constructing a large black screen on a stretch of a sidewalk to block the view of the mountain. The reason: misbehaving foreign tourists. “Kawaguchiko is a town built on tourism, and I welcome many visitors, and the town welcomes them too, but there are many things about their manners that are worrying,” said Michie Motomochi, owner of a café serving Japanese sweets, “ohagi,” near the soon-to-be-blocked photo spot. Motomochi mentioned littering, crossing the road with busy traffic, ignoring traffic lights, and trespassing into private properties. She isn’t unhappy though — 80% of her customers are foreign visitors whose numbers have surged after a pandemic hiatus that kept Japan closed for about two years.

Rebel playwright Juro Kara dies at 84

TOKYO (AP) — Juro Kara, who helped shape Japan’s postwar avant-garde theater, defiantly yet playfully transforming the essence of Kabuki aesthetics into modern storytelling, has passed away. He was 84 years old. The playwright, director, and troupe leader died from a blood clot in the brain after he collapsed at home and was rushed to a Tokyo hospital on May 1, his theater group Karagumi said in a statement. Kara, whose real name was Yoshihide Otsuru, rose to stardom in the so-called Japanese underground movement of the 1960s known as “un-gura,” characterized by a kitsch rebellious style also found in his contemporaries Shuji Terayama and Tadashi Suzuki. Kara’s colorful shows, often in makeshift tents evocative of a travelling circus, rejected the established theatrical modes then dominating modernizing Japan that were mostly western, middle class, and well-behaved. His plays, such as *Koshimaki Osen*, were characterized by a raw energetic physicality, blatantly devoid of any pretense at naturalism. Kara once compared his approach to “a womb covered in blood.” His theater came to be known as “the red tent.” A wandering group would put on his shows wherever the tents went up, most famously in a spot near a shrine in Shinjuku in downtown Tokyo. Audiences found themselves immersed in otherworldly, dreamlike settings. The flashy posters that artist Tadanori Yokoo often created for Kara’s works exemplified that signature pop surrealist style. Kara’s group is still active today, performing shows that carry on his legacy. His theater also served as a breeding ground for some of Japan’s top actors, including Kaoru Kobayashi and the late Jinpachi Nezu. Born in Tokyo, Kara majored in theater at Meiji University in Tokyo, which boasts an extensive archive of Kara’s works. In 1983, Kara won the prestigious Akutagawa Award for new writers for his novel *Letters from Sagawa*.



TREMENDOUS TASK. A man carries electronic voting machines as election officials walk to a polling booth (top photo) in a remote mountain area on the eve of the first round of voting in the six-week long national election at Dessa village in Doda district, Jammu and Kashmir, India. From the Himalayan mountains to the tropical Andaman Islands, Indian officials are using helicopters, busses, trucks, boats (bottom photo), donkeys, and mules to carry electronic voting machines for India’s gigantic national elections. The votes will be counted on June 4. (AP Photo/Channi Anand)

Ferrying voting machines to mountains and tropical areas in Indian elections is a Herculean task

NEW DELHI (AP) — From the Himalayan mountains to the tropical Andaman Islands, Indian officials are using helicopters, busses, trucks, boats, donkeys, and mules to carry electronic voting machines for India’s gigantic national elections.

Election officials are travelling through jungles and snow-covered mountain tracks, even wading through rivers to set up polling stations in tents, shipping containers, and school buildings in remote areas.

The massive seven-phase election in the world’s most populous country of more than 1.4 billion people started last month and will conclude on June 1. Nearly 970 million voters — more than 10% of the world’s population — will elect 543 members to the lower house of parliament for five years during the staggered elections.

The votes will be counted on June 4. Four donkeys lugged the voting machines to Kottur hills in the Dharmapuri parliamentary constituency in Tamil Nadu state in southern India where the first phase of voting was held.

In West Bengal state, however, the officials could not use mules to reach Srikhola, a remote village at 6,400 feet above sea level. In February, the forest department banned mules in Singalila National Park to prevent the spread of viral diseases in the wildlife sanctuary. They accepted the help of porters to carry machines to the polling center.

India moved from traditional ballot papers to electronic voting machines over two decades ago. A person needs to press the button against the name of the candidate or the party symbol



flashing on the machine’s screen to cast a vote. The party symbols range from a lotus to a hand, bow, arrow, pressure cooker, hammer, sickle, kettle, balloon, and torch.

An electronic voting machine has a ballot unit, a control unit for an official to ensure a voter can vote only once, and a voter verifiable paper audit trail unit, known as VVPAT, which produces a paper slip to verify the vote if challenged.

Opposition parties, including the Congress and the Communist Party of India, have demanded a return to paper ballots for casting votes. Their leaders have blamed their series of defeats at the hand of the Bharatiya Janata Party on the manipulation of the voting machines.

They have petitioned India’s Supreme Court but remain unsuccessful so far.

The Election Commission of India says its voting machines are not computer controlled; they are standalone machines and not connected to the internet or any other network at any point in time. Therefore, the commission says, there is no chance of hacking by remote devices.

2022

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Asian Currency Exchange Rates	
Units per U.S. dollar as of 5/03	
Bangladesh Taka	109.71
Cambodian Riel	4071.8
China Renminbi	7.2373
Fijian Dollar	2.254
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8119
Indian Rupee	83.382
Indonesian Rupiah	16084
Iranian Rial	42067
Japanese Yen	153.06
Laos New Kip	21337
Malaysian Ringgit	4.74
Nepal Rupee	133.5
Pakistani Rupee	278.5
Papua N.G. Kina	3.81
Philippine Peso	57.139
Russian Ruble	91.48
Saudi Riyal	3.7506
Singapore Dollar	1.3496
South Korean Won	1356.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	297.14
Taiwan Dollar	32.29
Thai Baht	36.73
Vietnam Dong	25415