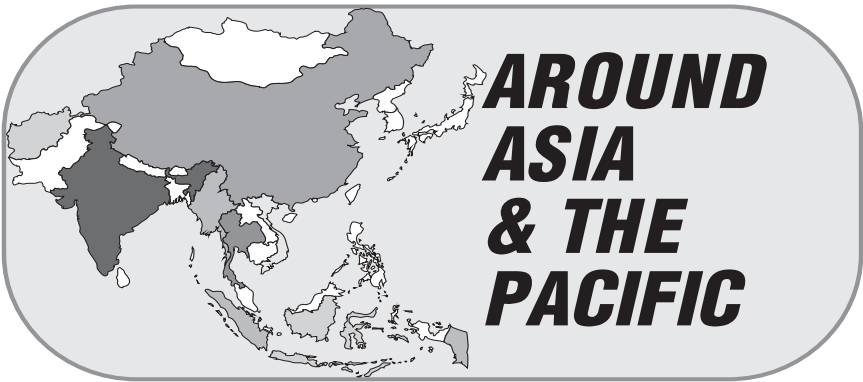




Bread loaves recalled in Japan after “rat remains” found

TOKYO (AP) — Loaves of bread were taken off store shelves in Japan after the remains of “a small animal” believed to be a rat were found. Production of the bread was halted at a Tokyo factory, with 104,000 packages being recalled, according to Pasco Shikishima Corp. The company apologized and promised compensation. “We will do our utmost to strengthen our quality controls so that this will never happen again. We ask for your understanding and your cooperation,” it said in a statement. Japanese media reports said at least two people who bought the bread in Gunma Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, complained to the company about finding a rodent in the bread. The bread had been sold in various areas, including Ibaraki, Niigata, Kanagawa, Fukushima, Aomori, and Tokyo, according to Pasco. The company, based in Nagoya city, central Japan, also makes rolls, bagels, and muffins. Japan boasts relatively high food safety standards. But the nation has been rocked by food woes recently, including 1,000 schoolchildren sickened by milk and two people who got sick after eating steak at a restaurant, both in May. Widespread food poisoning from a health supplement product also broke out in March and killed five people.

Owner of Nepal’s largest media organization arrested

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — The owner of Nepal’s largest news organization has been arrested for allegedly violating the country’s citizenship laws over an issue with his citizenship card. He was arrested at the Kathmandu offices of Kantipur Publications, which operates newspapers, television and radio stations, magazines, and online news sites. Sirohiya has denied any wrongdoing and accused Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane of seeking revenge for publishing news stories about alleged financial irregularities involving the minister. Opposition political parties have protested against Lamichhane and sought his resignation over the alleged irregularities. Police say Sirohiya’s citizenship card has the same number as another person’s, which would violate the country’s citizenship laws. National citizenship cards are issued to all Nepali adults and are the main document people use for identification, including during transactions. Several people in the past have been known to make fake citizenship certificates, mainly in southern Nepal bordering India.

EV maker Tesla building energy storage battery factory

BEIJING (AP) — Electric vehicle maker Tesla has begun construction of a factory in Shanghai to make its Megapack energy storage batteries, Chinese state media reported. The \$200 million plant in Shanghai’s Lingang pilot free trade zone will be the first Tesla battery plant outside the United States. Tesla opened an EV plant in Shanghai in 2019 that assembles cars for China, Europe, and other overseas markets. It is the No. 2 seller in the booming Chinese market for electric vehicles. The market leader is Chinese auto company BYD. The state-run Xinhua News Agency lauded Tesla’s commitment to investing in China and “defying the rhetoric of ‘decoupling’ and ‘de-risking’ from China.” It said the factory was slated to start mass production in early 2025, with an initial capacity of 10,000 Megapack units a year. According to Tesla’s website, each Megapack can store more than 3.9 megawatt hours of energy — enough to power an average of 3,600 homes for one hour. They are designed mainly for utility companies and commercial facilities. Such storage units have become increasingly important with the growth in solar and wind energy, which only generate electricity when weather conditions are favorable and need to store it for when residential and commercial users need it. China is by far the world leader in installing wind and solar capacity, making it a major market for energy storage.

Microsoft to invest \$2.2 billion in cloud and AI services

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Microsoft is investing \$2.2 billion over the next four years in Malaysia’s new cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure as well as partnering with the government to establish a national AI center, its CEO, Satya Nadella, said. It marks Microsoft’s single largest investment in Malaysia, as the tech giant seeks to bolster support for AI development in the region and worldwide. “We are committed to supporting Malaysia’s AI transformation and ensure it benefits all Malaysians,” he said. “Our investments in digital infrastructure and skilling will help Malaysian businesses, communities, and developers apply the latest technology to drive inclusive economic growth and innovation across the country.” Nadella also announced a \$1.7 billion investment in cloud and AI services in Indonesia during his visit there as part of his Southeast Asia tour. He said Microsoft will build its first regional data center in Thailand. In April, the tech giant similarly unveiled a \$2.9 billion investment in Japan and \$1.5 billion in G42, an AI firm in Abu Dhabi. Microsoft also pledged to provide AI training for 2.5 million people in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam by 2025. Nadella earlier had met Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who said the investment will be the key support pillar for the government’s goal to enhance AI capacity in Malaysia. The new investment will include AI training for another 300,000 people, the establishment of a national AI center of excellence, enhancing the nation’s cybersecurity capabilities, and supporting the growth of Malaysia’s developer community, Anwar said on Facebook. Microsoft runs one of the world’s largest cloud computing operations and has taken a leap into artificial intelligence through its partnership with OpenAI, developers of ChatGPT. Since then, Microsoft has integrated an AI assistant into its Microsoft Edge browser, named Copilot, helping lift its profits by 20% in the first quarter.



BUDDHA’S BIRTHDAY. Buddhists carry lanterns and walk in a parade during the lotus lantern festival, ahead of the birthday of Buddha in Seoul, South Korea, on May 11, 2024. The birthday of Buddha is a holy occasion for all Buddhists, but is celebrated on different dates depending on the school of Buddhism or country. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

From South Korea to India, devotees mark the birthday of Buddha with lanterns and prayers

By Deepa Bharath
The Associated Press

A devotee knelt and gently touched his head on the dome of the Boudhanath Stupa, an iconic Buddhist monument in Kathmandu, as a mark of reverence, which marks the birth of Buddha.

The birthday of Buddha is a holy occasion for all Buddhists, but is celebrated on different dates depending on the school of Buddhism or country to which one belongs.

Buddha’s birthday

The birthday of the historical Buddha or Shakyamuni Buddha, known as Vesak in several countries, celebrates the birth of the child who became Prince Siddhartha around the end of the 4th century B.C.

In several Asian countries, it is observed on the eighth day of the fourth month of the lunisolar calendar, which this year fell on May 15. In several South and Southeast Asian countries, it was celebrated on the first full moon of May, which was May 23.

Buddha’s birth and life

Siddhartha was born in Lumbini, which is at the border of what is India and Nepal today. His mother, Maya, was the wife of Siddhodana, king of the Shakya clan. According to Buddhist lore, when she conceived, the queen dreamed that an auspicious white elephant entered her womb. A number of texts recount the child’s miraculous birth, detailing how the baby was received by the gods Indra and Brahma, and took seven steps soon after he was born. He is then believed to have received a cleansing bath from the gods, or dragon kings, depending on the country or culture where the legend originated.

Suddhodana sheltered his son from pain and suffering, believing that keeping him isolated would put him on the path to becoming king. However, he could not protect Siddhartha for long, and the prince began to reflect after witnessing sickness, old age, and death. Disillusioned by the impermanence of life, Siddhartha engaged in six years of ascetic practice and attained enlightenment at the age of 35 in Bodh Gaya in northeast India. He then became known as the Buddha, which means “the awakened one.”

Why and how is Buddha’s birthday celebrated?

Buddhists around the world use this time to not only celebrate, but also reflect on Buddha’s teachings and what it means to practice the faith. In many parts of Asia, the sacred day marks not just the birth, but also the enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. In most Asian cultures and the diaspora, Buddhists go to their local temples and participate in chanting, meditation, and festivities all day. Families decorate their homes with lanterns and gather for feasts.

Koreas

Buddha’s birthday is a national holiday in South Korea. The highlight of the celebration in Seoul is the lotus lantern festival called Yeondeunghoe, a parade of thousands of colorful, lighted paper lanterns often shaped like lotus flowers that are hung in temples and streets. On Buddha’s birthday, many temples provide free meals and tea to all visitors. Festivities in temple yards and parks include traditional games and various performing arts displays. The luminous display is believed to

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Hong Kong Dollar	7.8212
Indian Rupee	83.438
Indonesian Rupiah	16257
Iranian Rial	42003
Japanese Yen	157.27
Laos New Kip	21623
Malaysian Ringgit	4.7075
Nepal Rupee	133.57
Pakistani Rupee	278.43
Papua N.G. Kina	3.834
Philippine Peso	58.585
Russian Ruble	90.192
Saudi Riyal	3.7508
Singapore Dollar	1.3512
South Korean Won	1383.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	300.74
Taiwan Dollar	32.48
Thai Baht	36.83
Vietnam Dong	25450