

Couple's message in bottle reaches Gaza



A picture shows the message Palestinian fisherman Jihad al-Soltan found in a bottle off a Gaza beach after it was placed in the water last July by two British tourists on holiday on the Greek island of Rhodes

Gaza City

A message in a bottle cast into the sea by a holidaying British couple on the island of Rhodes has washed up on the blockaded Gaza Strip, the fisherman who found it said yesterday.

Jihad al-Soltan retrieved the bottle while fishing on August 15.

Using the email address supplied, his family contacted the senders of the letter, Bethany Wright and her boyfriend Zac Marriner.

They had thrown the bottle into the sea during a romantic

holiday on the Greek island two months earlier.

"We are currently on holiday in Rhodes and we would love to know how far this bottle got -- even if it's just the next beach," the note read.

It had travelled a lot further, around 800 kilometres (500 miles), before Soltan retrieved it.

"They never expected it to reach Gaza!" he said.

The crowded coastal territory is largely closed off to the world under a crippling, decade-long Israeli blockade aimed at

isolating Hamas, the Islamist movement which runs the territory.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008.

Egypt, the only other country that shares a border with Gaza, has also largely sealed its frontier.

Fishing off the northern part of the strip, adjacent to Israel, is limited to six nautical miles offshore and the Israeli navy regularly fires at Palestinians at the zone's outer limit.

Post to Gaza usually goes through Israeli security measures. (AFP)

Factory shut for dumping dye after dogs turn blue

Mumbai

A factory accused of dumping dye into an Indian river where several dogs turned blue has been shut down, an official said yesterday, after alarming pictures emerged of the brightly-coloured canines.

An animal activist spotted the blue dogs wandering the streets of Mumbai near an industrial zone where factories had been accused of pouring untreated chemicals directly into the Kasadi river.

Arati Chauhan said dogs and



A stray dog with a light blue hue on a street near the Kasadi River in the Taloja industrial zone in Mumbai.

birds had been left a bright blue after swimming in the contaminated river.

"We managed to take one

dog for treatment as it was suffering with eye infection," Arati Chauhan, from Mumbai Animal Protection Cell, said.

#PollToday



Do you think Trump's Afghan strategy will help to make situations better in the country?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cant Say



"The situation is going from bad to worse. Almost one third of Nepal has been flooded. One third of Bangladesh is flooded. This is the worst flooding that parts of South Asia have seen in decades."

Jagan Chapagain
Red Cross under
secretary-general

Rest in sight

42 injured in US train crash



A train crash in the eastern US city of Philadelphia injured 42 people early.

Indian transgender couple plan to marry, adopt

An Indian couple who fell in love after meeting at a gender-reassignment clinic in Mumbai announced they were engaged and planning a traditional wedding.

Housewife jailed for blasphemy in Indonesia

An Indonesian housewife has been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for insulting Islam.

Man charged with plotting to bomb statue

A 25-year old man who allegedly planned to blow up a Confederate statue in Houston, Texas has been arrested.

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China defends Pakistan against Trump criticism

Beijing

China yesterday defended its friend Pakistan against strong criticism by Donald Trump that the country is not doing enough to counter terrorism.

In a major speech outlining US policy on Afghanistan, the American president slammed Islamabad for offering safe haven to "agents of chaos".

Successive US administrations have criticised Pakistan for links with the Taliban and for

harbouring leading jihadists -- like Osama bin Laden.

"We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting," Trump said, warning that vital aid could be cut.

But Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying took a contrary view, telling reporters that Pakistan "has made great sacrifices and contributions to fighting terrorism".

Rare white koala born at Australian zoo



A white koala joey on her mother Tia at the Australia Zoo on Queensland's Sunshine Coast

A koala at an Australian zoo has given birth to a rare white joey, staff announced yesterday.

Handlers at the Australia Zoo on Queensland's Sunshine Coast say the pale animal born in January owes its white fur to a recessive gene inherited from mother Tia.

The mother has given birth to light-coloured joeys in the past.

"In veterinary science it's often referred to as

the 'silvering gene' where animals are born with white or very pale fur and, just like baby teeth, they eventually shed their baby fur and the regular adult colouration comes through," said the zoo's wildlife hospital director Rosie Booth in a statement.

Koala fur differs in colour -- from light grey to brown -- depending on their environment. Animals in the south of Australia tend to have thicker and darker fur than those in the north.

India's top court bans instant divorce

New Delhi

India's top court yesterday banned a practice that allows men to divorce their wives instantly.

The Supreme Court ruled that the practice of "triple talaq", whereby Muslim men can divorce their wives by reciting the word talaq (divorce) three times, was both unconstitutional and un-Islamic.

Victims including Shayara Bano, whose husband used triple talaq to divorce her in 2015, had approached India's highest court to ask for a ruling.

A panel of five male judges

from India's major faiths -- Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism -- said triple talaq was "not integral to religious practice and violates constitutional morality".

They said it was "manifestly arbitrary" to allow a man to "break down (a) marriage whimsically and capriciously".

"What is sinful under religion cannot be valid under law," said the judges.

Bano, who suffered a nervous breakdown after her divorce, said it was a "historic occasion" for Muslim women.