

## Australian survives three weeks lost in crocodile-infested forest



Police initially feared the man had been eaten by a crocodile, but after days of searching were unable to find any of the reptiles big enough to have taken him

Sydney

An Australian man was found alive and well after being lost for three weeks in a crocodile-infested rain forest in the far north of the country, police said.

Milan Lemic disappeared after his vehicle became bogged down on December 22 while travelling through the Daintree forest in the northeastern state of Queensland.

Police initially feared Lemic, 29, had been eaten by a crocodile, which are numerous in the region, but after days of searching were unable to locate any of the reptiles big enough to have taken him.

He was finally found by police on Monday several kilometres (miles) from his abandoned vehicle.

"He was in good physical condition considering he had been in the rain forest for three weeks," police said in a statement.

Lemic survived on wild fruit and berries, they said.

## Florida man catches oldest grouper fish, 50, in records

Miami

You never know what you'll get when you go fishing in Florida. You might accidentally catch an alligator, a snake -- or, for one man, the oldest grouper on record.

Researchers estimate that the Warsaw grouper, caught in December, was 50 years old.

The fish is "the oldest sample collected for our ageing programme," the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Research Institute said Friday in a Facebook post.

Biologists in the FWC Age and Growth Lab calculated the grouper's age by examining its otoliths, also known as "earstones," which are hard calcium structures located behind the brain in bony fish.

Otoliths allow scientists to estimate a fish's age.

The FWC accompanied the post with a photograph of Jason Boyll, an amateur fisherman from the southwestern Siesta Key who caught the 350-pound (160 kilograms) grouper.

In the photo, Boyll is stand-



A 350-pound, 50-year-old Warsaw grouper caught in waters off Florida

ing next to his catch, which is taller than he is.

Boyll caught the grouper off the west coast of Florida on December 29, at a depth of 600 feet (182 meters), according to the FWC.

Warsaw groupers can weigh up to 570 pounds.

# More than 130 dead as severe weather hits Pakistan, Afghan

● At least 93 people died and 76 were injured across Pakistan

● A further 39 were killed in Afghanistan

AFP | Islamabad

Avalanches, flooding and harsh winter weather has killed more than 130 people across Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent days, officials said yesterday, as authorities struggled to reach people stranded by heavy snowfall.

At least 93 people died and 76 were injured across Pakistan -- with several still missing -- while a further 39 were killed in Afghanistan, according to officials in both countries.

Forecasts suggest more harsh weather is on the way.

Kashmir was the worst-hit area, with 62 people killed and 10 others missing, the State Disaster Management Authority said in a statement.

In the picturesque but conflict-riven Neelum Valley in Kashmir, heavy snowfall triggered several avalanches, including one that killed at least 19 people.

"An avalanche hit their vil-



A man removes snow from his boat on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar in India

lage, 10 people are still missing," the SDMA said.

Frequent avalanches and landslides occur in Kashmir during the winter, often blocking roads and leaving communities isolated.

Authorities have shuttered schools, while several highways and roads were closed across the country's northern mountainous areas, according to officials.

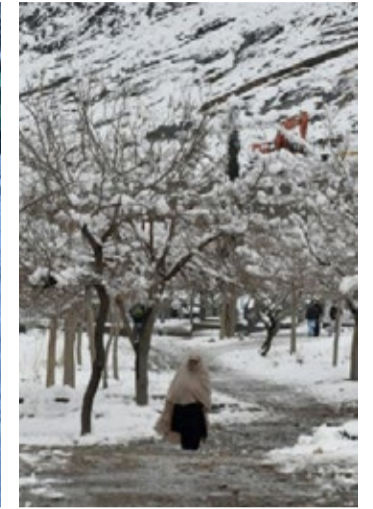
"The severe snowfalls and landslides in AJK have caused misery & deaths," tweeted Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, referring to the part of Kashmir controlled by Islamabad.

To the southeast, in Balochistan province, at least 31 people had been killed in separate weather-related incidents.

"Most of those who died were women and children," said Mohammad Younus, an official with the provincial disaster management authority, adding that hundreds remained stranded.

Across the border in Afghanistan, more than 300 houses were either destroyed or partially damaged throughout the country, said Ahmad Tamim Azimi a spokesman for the Natural Disaster Management Authority.

"A cold snap, heavy snowfall



A woman walks down a path in Quetta, Pakistan, after heavy snow

and rains that started two weeks ago have caused damage," he said, adding that most casualties were caused after roofs collapsed under thick snow.

Hardest hit were southern Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and western Herat provinces.

In Herat, seven people -- all members of the same family and including children -- died when their roof caved in, Azimi added.

Harsh winters often take a heavy toll in mountainous Afghanistan, and the country remains poor despite billions of dollars in aid from the international community.

## Six arrested for damaging Machu Picchu area

● The group was made up of one French, two Brazilians, two Argentines and a Chilean

Lima

Six tourists, including a French woman, have been arrested over accusations that they damaged Peru's cultural heritage by defecating in a sacred temple at the iconic Machu Picchu sanctuary.

"The six tourists are being detained and investigated by the public ministry for the alleged crime against cultural heritage," Cusco regional police chief Wilbert Leyva said on Monday, quoted by the local Andina news agency.

The tourists were arrested on Sunday after park rangers and police found them in a restricted area of the Temple of the Sun, an important site at the Inca citadel.



Machu Picchu is the most iconic site from the Inca empire that ruled much of western South America in the 15th and 16th centuries

Leyva said authorities had come across a "fracture" in a piece of stone that had "broken off a wall and caused a crack in the floor."

Cultural authorities from Cusco, the region where Machu Picchu is located, said feces were found in the Temple of the Sun.

The group was made up of

one French, two Brazilians, two Argentines and a Chilean, according to police.

They face at least four years in prison if found guilty of damaging Peru's heritage.

Several parts of the semicircular Temple of the Sun are off limits to tourists for preservation reasons.

Worshippers at the temple

would make offerings to the sun, which was considered the most important deity in the Inca empire as well as other pre-Inca civilizations in the Andean region.

The Machu Picchu estate -- which includes three distinct areas for agriculture, housing and religious ceremonies -- is the most iconic site from the Inca empire that ruled a large swathe of western South America for 100 years before the Spanish conquest in the 16th century.

Machu Picchu, which means "old mountain" in the Quechua language indigenous to the area, is at the top of a lush mountain and was built during the reign of the Inca emperor Pachacuti (1438-1471).

It lies around 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Andean city of Cusco, the old Inca capital in southeastern Peru.

The site was rediscovered in 1911 by the American explorer Hiram Bingham. UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 1983.

## Volcano erupts on ecologically sensitive Galapagos island

AFP | Quito

A volcano erupted on an uninhabited island in the Galapagos, Ecuadorian authorities said, spewing lava on the ecologically sensitive environment.

La Cumbre volcano on Fernandina island, one of the youngest in the archipelago, began erupting Sunday evening, Galapagos National Park (PNG) officials said in a statement.

The 1,467 metre high (4,813 feet) volcano has a crack along



its south-eastern flank and "a lava flow descends to the coast", PNG added.

The island is home to a number of species including iguanas, penguins, flightless cormorants, snakes and an endemic rat, and has "very important" ecological value, PNG said.

Before the eruption, an earthquake with a magni-

tude of 4.7 was felt, according to the local Ecuadorian Geophysical Institute, followed by 29 aftershocks.

The volcano also erupted in June 2018.

The unique fauna of the UNESCO-listed Galapagos Islands -- located 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) east of mainland Ecuador -- helped English naturalist Charles Darwin develop his theory of evolution by natural selection.