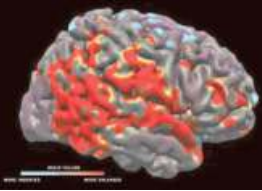




Chef stopped at airport with frozen piranhas

LOS ANGELES
Virgilio Martinez, a famous South American chef, said he was stopped as he brought 40 piranhas in a duffel bag through the Los Angeles International Airport. He hoped to serve the predatory, sharp-toothed fish during an LA food festival. **AP**



California to ban pesticide that affects babies' brains

LOS ANGELES
California, the most productive agricultural State in the U.S., is set to ban a controversial pesticide widely used to control a range of insects but blamed for harming brain development in babies. The move, cheered by environmentalists, would outlaw chlorpyrifos after scientists deemed it a toxic air contaminant. **AP**

Australia's top bank takes responsibility for note typo

'Responsibility' misspelt as 'responsibilty'



The typo appears in the microprint of a speech by Australia's first woman parliamentarian Edith Cowan. **• AFP**

REUTERS
SYDNEY

About 46 million A\$50 currency notes in Australia have an embarrassing typographical error that was overlooked by the central bank before they were printed and circulated.

The goof-up first became known on Thursday, when a listener to radio broadcaster Triple M sent it a magnified photo of the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) new A\$50 note highlighting the word "responsibility" mis-

Barn owls to play Tom, fight Jerry in Lakshadweep

Three pairs from Kerala 'recruited' to fight rodent menace

TIKI RAJWI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With a thriving rat population playing havoc with its coconut yield, the union territory of Lakshadweep is turning to barn owls for help.

The scenic islands have 'recruited' three pairs of barn owls from Kerala to fight what has so far been a losing battle against the rodents. After a lengthy bureaucratic process that began in 2017, the winged hunters have now reached Kavaratti by ship. For the time being, the three males and three females are getting acclimatised in specially built cages.

"They will gradually be released into the coconut plantations under a closely monitored breeding and rodent management programme," Damodhar A.T., Secretary, Environment and Agriculture, Lakshadweep Islands, said. According to the authorities, the owls were chosen from among



Lakshadweep farmers lose about 30% to 40% of their crops to pesky rodents.

healthy birds rescued by the Kerala Forest Department.

The biocontrol measure is spearheaded by the Lakshadweep Administration, with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Kavaratti providing the technical knowhow. Coconut is an important money-spinner for the islands, but the pesky rodents account for 30 to 40% of the yield loss. Total production stood at 8.76 crore nuts in 2017-18.

That said, employing owls to hunt down rats is not a new idea for the islanders.

Similar attempts were reportedly made in the 1960s as well. "Again, it's not just about collecting a few birds and releasing them into the coconut plantations. It has to be a breeding programme. Also, these are birds in the scheduled list and need to be cared for as such," he said.

Why barn owls?

So, why barn owls? Why not other accomplished rat hunters like cats or rat snakes? The reason is that the rats in the Lakshadweep Islands practically live on the tree-tops.

"The coconut palms here grow so close together they resemble a jungle. The fronds overlap allowing the rodents to easily move from one tree to another," Thamban C., Principal Scientist, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod, said. Besides, the nocturnal barn owls are natural rat hunters, armed with a powerful auditory mechanism.

Indian Christian provides iftar to 800 Muslims

Saji Cheriyan also built a mosque in Dubai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

An Indian-Christian businessman, who built a mosque for Muslim workers in the UAE, is serving iftar meals to nearly 800 workers during the ongoing month of Ramzan.

Saji Cheriyan, 49, who hails from Kayamkulam in Kerala, built the mosque last year for Muslim workers living in an accommodation that he rented out to 53 companies in Fujairah.

He built the Mariam Umm Eisa (Mary, the Mother of Jesus) mosque after he saw workers spending their earnings on taxis to get to the nearest mosque during the holy month. Ramzan began on May 7.

Humble beginning

Mr. Cheriyan, who landed in the UAE in 2003 with just a few hundred dirhams, hosts iftar for about 800 people, including workers and other



The world needs people like him... We are praying for him. Allah will bless him

ABDUL QAYUM
Pakistani bus driver

senior employees of various companies, at an air conditioned convention centre in the same complex, the *Gulf News* reported.

"The mosque opened on the 17th night of Ramzan last year. So, I could offer iftar to the worshippers only for the remaining days. From this year, I would be doing it every day," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

Abdul Qayum, 63, a Pakistani bus driver, who had iftar on Wednesday, appreciated Mr. Cheriyan's efforts.

"The world needs people like him. If there are no people like him, the world will end. We are praying for him. Allah will bless him."

BBC presenter sacked for royal baby tweet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Veteran British broadcaster Danny Baker was on Thursday fired by the BBC after tweeting a picture of well-dressed couple holding hands with a chimpanzee in a suit, tagged with the caption "royal baby leaves hospital".

Accusations of racism immediately flooded his timeline, as new royal baby Archie has mixed-race heritage through mother Meghan. He later took down the picture, apologising for the "possible connotations".

But the BBC announced Mr. Baker, 61, would be leaving his job as presenter on Radio 5 Live.

"This was a serious error of judgment and goes against the values we as a station aim to embody," said the broadcaster.

"Danny's a brilliant broadcaster but will no longer be presenting a weekly show with us."

Mr. Baker, who made his name as a music writer during the punk era, began his radio career in 1989 and has also presented television quiz shows. He hit back at his sacking, saying the BBC "threw me under the bus". "Would have used same stupid pic for any other Royal birth or Boris Johnson kid or even one of my own. It's a funny image," he said.

In 'happy' Bhutan, PM turns a doctor on Saturdays

On weekdays, Lotay Tshering says he scans the health of policies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
THIMPHU

It's Saturday in Bhutan and Lotay Tshering has just completed urinary bladder repair surgery on a patient at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital.

But Mr. Tshering is no ordinary doctor. During the week, he also happens to be Prime Minister in the Himalayan kingdom famous for measuring citizens' Gross National Happiness.

"For me it's a de-stresser," said Mr. Tshering, who was elected Prime Minister of the nation of 7,50,000 people last year.

"Some people play golf, some do archery, and I like to operate. I am just spending my weekends here," the 50-year-old said.

No one at the hospital bats an eyelid as Mr. Tshering, wearing a faded lab coat and crocs, walks through the busy corridors.

Nurses and hospital attendants continue with their jobs as normal.

A case apart

The Buddhist kingdom is in many ways a case apart, benchmarking itself on happiness instead of economic growth.

One of the pillars of Gross National Happiness is conservation of the environ-



In safe hands: Bhutan's PM Lotay Tshering, left, speaking with patients at the National Referral Hospital in Thimphu. **• AFP**

ment. Bhutan is carbon negative and its constitution mandates that 60% of the country remains forested. It is also big on ecotourism and charges a daily fee of \$250 per visitor in high season.

Mr. Tshering, who trained in Bangladesh, Japan, Australia and the U.S., began his political career in 2013, but his party failed to make headway in that year's election.

After losing, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck commanded him to lead a team of doctors and travel with the monarch's entourage to far-flung villages to provide free medical treatment.

Now as Prime Minister, he spends Saturdays treating patients referred to him and on Thursday mornings offer-

ing medical advice to trainees and doctors. Sunday is family time.

Back in the Prime Minister's office, a lab coat hangs on the back of his chair.

Under the PM's knife

At the hospital, Mr. Tshering's patient, a 40-year-old man named Bumthap who underwent a five-hour bladder repair surgery, said he was pleased with the results.

"Now that I have been operated on by the PM, who is considered one of the best doctors in the country, I feel more relieved," he said.

Politics, the Prime Minister said, is a lot like being a doctor.

"At the hospital I scan and treat patients. In the government, I scan the health of policies and try to make them better," he said.