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Vol. 20 No. 50 December 11, 2023

Everybody's Talking

House of gold: Someone who wants to see a real house of gold will have to go to Vietnam. There, in the city of Can Tho, is a three-story home that is gilded in gold, inside and out. It was built by a real estate entrepreneur named Nguyen Van Trung, who opened his home to tourists after seeing the public's interest in the place. To be sure, not everything in the house is real gold: many items are merely painted in that lustrous colour. However, the effect is mesmerizing because everything, including chairs, kitchen cabinets, ceiling fixtures, decorative items, and rugs are all touched with gold.

No fun: French employees who just want to get their work done, forgoing the usual "fun" stuff like going out for lunch or dinner with colleagues, can rest assured that they are allowed to do just that. As a matter of fact, they can be as boring as they'd like at work. That was made clear when a man, who was fired for not being "fun," took his employer to court and won. Known as "Mr. T" for privacy reasons, the man simply did not want to go out with his fellow staff members, and the courts agreed that he should not be obliged to do so. No more legislating "fun" in a company's policy manual!

Hidden homes: When visiting the islands of Greece, tourists usually find sun-drenched villages by the sea. That quality can be found today on Ikaria, but it wasn't always so on this far-flung isle in the Aegean Sea, about 213 kilometres (133 mi.) east of Athens. Over the centuries, Ikaria was vulnerable to pirate raids, but the island's people came up with an ingenious defence. They built squat rock homes up in the mountains. The homes were barely visible to someone walking by them, let alone by pirates in the sea. The trick worked because Ikaria looked uninhabited and not worth the trouble for pirate ships to visit.

Herd mentality: A sheep farmer in Inner Mongolia in northern China witnessed some strange behaviour from some of his animals. Identified as Miao, the farmer found the group of sheep continually walking in circles in their pen, with a few standing in the middle. But only the sheep in pen number 13 were walking in circles, which was odd because there were 33 other pens on the farm. Experts ruled out disease as the cause, and figured that the sheep were bored. When a few of them started walking in circles, others followed because of their pack animal mentality. All the sheep seemed to be in good health, but the behaviour is not very common.

Quoteable Quotes

"To the world you may just be one person, but to one person you may be the world." —Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

"Great necessities call out great virtues." —Abigail Adams

What's Happening

Dec 11 - The Many Moods of Christmas with Greenwood Singers Join Greenwood Singers this holiday season for their annual presentation of The Many Moods of Christmas. 7:30 pm. All Saints Anglican Cathedral, 10035 103 St NW. \$25 per ticket online through Eventbrite

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Trivia

1. Who wrote the 1954 novel Lucky Jim?
2. How many species of ants have been identified in the world?
3. A volcanic mudflow is a lahar, avalanche, or magma river?
4. A dish labeled "Florentine" usually is prepared with spinach, potatoes, or apples?
5. What is a baby rhinoceros called?

(Flip bottom of page for answers)

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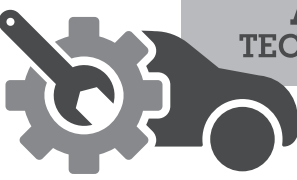
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Your Weekly Horoscope

ARIES
(March 20 - April 19)

At midweek, you may feel a burst of energy aimed at healing an issue for yourself or others. While doing so, try to focus on what you most believe in now. Lucky numbers: 1, 5, 10, 31, 32, 44.

TAURUS
(April 20 - May 20)

A sudden or unexpected event may upset your emotional balance. You might consider making an adjustment that stretches your ability to be flexible to changes in your environment. Lucky numbers: 2, 8, 26, 33, 39, 42.

GEMINI
(May 21 - June 20)

Your thoughts and emotions may be out of sync at the beginning of the week. You might want to take a deep breath and postpone important decisions for a few days. Lucky numbers: 16, 18, 23, 31, 41, 47.

CANCER
(June 21 - July 21)

You may experience a stalemate within yourself or with others. For a resolution to be found, each party needs to clearly state expectations and be willing to compromise. Lucky numbers: 10, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22.

LEO
(July 22 - Aug. 22)

Leos are often comfortable in the limelight, getting credit for their individual accomplishments. Week's end may bring an opportunity to use your skills for a larger purpose. Lucky numbers: 5, 17, 20, 24, 40, 48.

VIRGO
(Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)

Any sense of dissatisfaction you have been feeling for the last few weeks could hit a peak now. Consider how you might loosen any rigid boundaries you may have. Lucky numbers: 11, 14, 20, 28, 34, 36.

LIBRA
(Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)

This may be a good time to seek out an opportunity that will align yourself with your highest values. Don't be afraid to present your authentic self to others. Lucky numbers: 7, 11, 19, 22, 43, 45.

SCORPIO
(Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)

Sometimes Scorpios have difficulty in effectively communicating their deep, intuitive insights in a way that is helpful to others. The energy this week may ease this dynamic. Lucky numbers: 14, 15, 21, 28, 33, 40.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 22 - Dec. 20)

Early this week may be a good time to set your intention for the upcoming month. Your heart and mind could be perfectly in sync about what you want to do. Lucky numbers: 3, 9, 15, 24, 35, 41.

CAPRICORN
(Dec. 21 - Jan. 19)

At midweek, any negotiations you have recently undertaken may be subject to changing in a detrimental way. Double-checking the important points of the agreement might be wise. Lucky numbers: 4, 14, 15, 38, 40, 46.

AQUARIUS
(Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

Do you have a goal that requires help from others for completion? The end of the week may be a good time to project your enthusiasm and request what you need. Lucky numbers: 12, 15, 20, 28, 29, 46.

PISCES
(Feb. 19 - March 19)

You may encounter difficulties or challenges at week's end. Try to find your deepest strength and resist the temptation to do something that is not in your best interests. Lucky numbers: 15, 18, 27, 34, 40, 46.

Lucky numbers this week: This week's odds favour Aquarius winners with the luckiest number being 20.

Did You Know...

Pretty tree: The fast-growing Tibetan cherry tree (*Prunus serrula*) is native to western China and Tibet. Its bark is coppery red in colour, and it blooms with white flowers. Its cherries are not edible.

Purple flag: When headed to the beach for a day of fun in the ocean, be aware that if a purple flag is flying, marine pests could be present, such as jellyfish and stingrays. Sharks are signaled by red flags.

Secret passageway: A cozy dining place in Amsterdam is Café Papeneiland. Run by the same family since it opened in 1642, the café is known for its *appeltaart* (apple pie). It also has a secret tunnel to a nearby church.

Wizard man: Inventor Thomas Edison was known as the "Wizard of Menlo Park." He had a research site in Menlo Park, New Jersey (U.S.), in the late 1800s where he and his staff worked on different inventions.

Keeping cool: Summer heat waves can be harmful to your health! When temperatures climb, stay cool in an air-conditioned space like a home, store, or library. Limit exercise, drink lots of water, and wear loose, lightweight clothing.

On the Lighter Side

Never play hide and seek with a mountain. They always peak.

I've just read a book about camping. It was in tents.

Patient: "Were my test results negative?"
Doctor: "Yes, but it was an IQ test."

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?* Duet. *Duet who?* Duet right, or don't duet at all.

Why was the dot-to-dot struggling? It was having a hard time connecting.

Answers

Trivia answers: 1. Kingsley Amis 2. Over 12,000 3. Lahar 4. Spinach 5. Calif

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