



Urawa removes discriminatory banner from stadium

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese soccer club Urawa Reds have removed a banner from their home stadium over fears the sign could be considered racist. The banner, which was next to an entrance gate, had the words “Japanese Only” written on it but was taken down before the game against Sagan Tosu. A statement on the team’s official website read: “As far as the club is concerned, racist language or behavior is totally inexcusable.” It was not known who put the sign up, but the team said they are “working to establish the facts of the incident.” Most teams in the J-League have foreign players on their rosters, but Urawa did not have a single foreigner on its squad for the match, which Urawa lost 1-0. The team is coached by Serbian Mihailo Petrovic.

Chinese urge Canada to keep immigration program

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese millionaires are urging the Canadian government to keep its investor immigrant program and not eliminate the thousands of backlogged applications from Chinese nationals. Ten applicants to the program said at a news conference that their faith in Canada as a “trustworthy country,” with its attractive rule of law, environment, and welfare system, was wavering. Canada said last month that it intended to end the immigrant investor program and eliminate the longstanding backlog of applications for more than 65,000 people, most of whom are Chinese. Investor applicants, some of whom had applied five years ago, said they are discussing with lawyers whether to claim compensation for the years they have been waiting.

East Timor PM Gusmao plans to quit in September

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — East Timor Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao plans to step down in September so a younger generation can lead the tiny nation. Vice Prime Minister Fernando La Samma De Araujo said the resistance leader just wants to be the father of the nation to oversee the administration as an observer. De Araujo said the 67-year-old Gusmao expressed his intention informally to both his cabinet ministers and the people. He added that the decision is based on deep thought and reflection, inspired by the late South African leader Nelson Mandela and Singapore’s first Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew. The former resistance leader became the first president of East Timor and its fourth prime minister since August 2007.

Malaysia bans Ultraman book over use of Allah

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia has banned an Ultraman comic book because it uses the word “Allah” to describe the Japanese action hero. The Home Ministry said in a statement that the Malay-edition of *Ultraman, The Ultra Power* contained elements that can undermine public security and societal morals. It said “Ultraman is idolized by many children” and equating the lead character, Ultraman King, with Allah would especially “confuse Muslim children and damage their faith.” Allah, the Arabic word for god, is commonly used in the Malay language to refer to god. The government says Allah should be exclusively reserved for Muslims because of concerns its use by others would confuse Muslims and tempt them to convert. Malay Muslims account for about 60 percent of Malaysia’s 30 million people, while Christians makeup about nine percent of the country’s population. The ministry said Allah is holy for Muslims and warned that such irresponsible use of the word can provoke the community and threaten public safety. Ultraman is a fictional Japanese superhero who fights monsters and first appeared on television in the 1960s. A line in the book says Ultraman “is considered and respected as Allah, or the Elder, to all ultra heroes.”

Canada ends military operations in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Canada ended military operations in Afghanistan this month, finishing a 12-year mission as the international community winds down its role in the country ahead of an end-of-year deadline for foreign combat operations to end. The Canadians formally ended their combat role in southern Afghanistan in July 2011 but maintained a small training operation in Kabul. “Canada played a critical role in securing Kandahar Province and had a strategic impact across the country with their contribution to the NATO training mission,” the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Joseph Dunford, said during a flag-lowering ceremony at the headquarters for international forces in Kabul. At its peak, Canada was the sixth largest troop-contributing nation, behind the U.S., Britain, Germany, France, and Italy. It deployed more than 40,000 service members to Afghanistan since the mission began in 2001. Like Americans and Europeans, Canadians have grown weary of the war.

Malaysian couple to hang for murder of maid

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Malaysian court has sentenced a couple to death by hanging for murdering their 26-year-old Indonesian housemaid three years ago, according to a lawyer. Defense lawyer Thong Seng Kong said the High Court found electrician Fong Kong Meng, 58, and his wife Teoh Ching Yen, 56, guilty of killing their maid, Isti Komariyah. He said the court ruled that Isti had died of starvation because the couple failed to provide sufficient food and medical attention. Isti, who had worked for the couple for nearly two years, was declared dead after being taken to a hospital in June 2011. Prosecutors said she weighed only 57 pounds and had bruises and scratch marks on her body. “The court has sentenced the couple to hang for murder,” said Thong, adding they are expected to appeal the sentence. Cases involving employers who assaulted their domestic workers, mainly from Indonesia, have occasionally strained Malaysia’s ties with some of its Asian neighbors over the past decade.



REFUSE RULES. A climber prepares to descend the Hillary Step while making his way down from the summit of Mount Everest in the Khumbu region of the Nepal Himalayas. The Mount Everest climbing season began this month with new rules that require climbers to bring down their personal garbage, and more security officials at the mountain’s base camp to help climbers. (AP Photo/Alpenglow Expeditions, Adrian Ballinger, File)

New rules in place as Everest climbing season begins

By Binaj Gurubacharya
The Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — The Mount Everest climbing season began this month with new rules that require climbers to bring down their personal garbage, and more security officials at the mountain’s base camp to help climbers.

Tourism ministry official Maddhu Sudan Burlakoti said individual climbers going beyond the base camp are required to bring down at least 17.6 pounds of their personal garbage and hand it over to officials stationed there.

It is the latest attempt by the Nepalese government to clean up the world’s highest mountain, which draws hundreds of western climbers and a steady income for the local and national economy, and produces lots of garbage. Until now, climbing teams were asked to bring down their trash or risk losing a \$4,000 deposit — which wasn’t very effective as this wasn’t widely enforced.

More than 4,000 climbers have scaled the 8,850-meter (29,035-foot) summit since it was conquered in 1953 by Sir Edmund Hillary and

his Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay. Over the years, climbers have left tons of garbage on the slopes of the mountain, and some have called it the “world’s highest garbage dump.”

Burlakoti said officials posted at the base camp would check climbers to make sure that each brings down food wrappings, tents, ropes, clothes, crampons, pegs, and gas cans. It was not clear how climbers failing to comply would be punished.

The government is also opening up a contact office tent at the base camp with officials stationed there throughout the spring climbing season, which begins in March and ends in May. They will offer help to climbers, resolve any problems between climbers, and monitor the garbage situation.

Last year, a brawl between western climbers and their Nepalese guides on the mountain sparked safety concerns.

Nepal officials say the rules will protect the environment, better manage climbers, and increase their safety, especially as their numbers grow.

Nepal has eight of the 14 highest mountains in the world.

K-pop group managed by Jackie Chan to debut album

HONG KONG (AP) — Jackie Chan is transforming himself from action film superstar to K-pop band manager.

The group named JJCC plans to release its debut album March 24 in South Korea, before promoting it in China. JJCC has five men in their early 20s. Four are South Korean, while one is Australian-Chinese.

Sha-sha Lee, CEO of the Jackie Chan Group South Korea, said Chan was involved in

auditioning the band members and will manage the group personally.

The band name is a tribute to Chan as well as his effort to “join cultures” in Asia.

Lee said all five members are triple threats who can sing, dance, rap, and might act alongside Chan on the silver screen in the future.

Chan, 59, learned acting, singing, and

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