## Ai Weiwei, Joan Baez honored by Amnesty International

<u>By Isolda Morillo and Jack Chang</u> The Associated Press

Bilding—Amnesty International has awarded its top honor to Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei, who has spent years shining light on his country's restrictive political atmosphere, and to U.S. folk singer Joan Baez for her civil-rights activism.

Both were named Ambassador of Conscience Award recipients, which recognizes lifetime human-rights leadership.

Ai told The Associated Press that the award reminded him of his social responsibilities as an artist, especially as the Chinese government tightens its grip on free expression and activism.

He noted that the repression was affecting "ordinary people around us concerned about basic issues" while answering a question about five women's rights activists who remain in custody for planning anti-sexual-harassment protests.

"I think as an artist, I use my own way to fulfill my responsibility to society," the bearded 57-year-old said. "Whether we have compassion for our own people or

## Japan opts for massive, costly sea wall to fend off tsunamis

Continued from page 4

Despite pockets of opposition, getting people to agree to forego the sea walls and opt instead for Hosokawa's "Great Forest Wall" plan is a tough sell, says Tomoaki Takahashi, whose job is to win support for the forest project in local communities.

"Actually, many people are in favor of the sea walls, because they will create jobs," said Takahashi. "But even people who really don't like the idea also feel as if they would be shunned if they don't go along with those who support the plan," he said.

While the "Great Forest Wall" being planted in some areas would not stave off flooding, it would slow tsunamis and weaken the force of their waves. As waters recede, the vegetation would help prevent buildings and other debris from flowing back out to sea. Such projects would also allow rain water to flow back into the sea, a vital element of marine ecology.

Some voices in unexpected places are urging a rethink of the plan.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's wife, Akie, offered numerous objections to cementing the northeast coast at a speech in New York last September. She said the walls may prevent residents from keeping an eye out for future tsunamis and would be costly to maintain for already dwindling coastal communities.

"Please do not proceed even if it's already decided," she said. Instead of a one-size-fits-all policy, she suggested making the plan more flexible. "I ask, is building high sea walls to shield the coast line really, really the best?"

Rikuzentakata, a small city near Osabe whose downtown area was wiped out by the tsunami, is building a higher sea wall, but also moving many tons of earth to raise the land well above sea level.

Local leader Takeshi Konno said no construction project will eliminate the need for coastal residents to protect themselves.

"What I want to stress is that no matter what people try to create, it won't beat nature, so we humans need to find a way to co-exist with nature," Konno said. "Escaping when there is danger. The most important thing is to save your life."

Associated Press writers Miki Toda and Koji Ueda contributed to this report from Rikuzentakata and Osabe.



other countries, we all have to take responsibility."

Baez was cited by Amnesty International for her involvement in U.S. civilrights activism since the 1960s.

Over the past four years, Ai has paid a high price for his activism, having been

## Lee eulogized at funeral as architect of Singapore

Continued from page 3

competitive.

Today, Singapore's GDP is among the highest in the world at \$54,000 per head, according to the World Bank, and it consistently ranks at the top of surveys of competiveness, while other Southeast Asian nations lag far behind.

Lee gained "disproportionate influence" in international politics because of his record in shaping Singapore into the kind of nation that would be useful to the international political and economic order, said London-based author Salil Tripathi, who was a foreign correspondent in Singapore in the 1990s.

"His sharp intellect gave him the aura of an elder statesman, allowing his admirers at home and abroad to overlook more complicated facts about him, including how political opponents were treated," he said, and "how there was little space for imagination on that crowded island."

# Don't just eat that ramen: Go to a museum and learn about it

Continued from page 16

Bazaar, said to reproduce an "Asian night market" and "eight varieties of noodles that Ando encountered during his travels in search of ramen's origins." The food stands include Italian pasta, Vietnamese pho, and dishes from Kazakhstan, China, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. And there's a play area (an extra 300 yen) where kids can experience the Cup Noodle manufacturing process from the point of view of the noodle.

The main attraction here, though, is the make-your-own section. For a separate fee for a timed ticket, kids (or adults) can make their own personal Cup Noodle, decorating the cup, then putting in the noodles and choosing the soup and toppings. Watch the lid get sealed and the whole cup shrink-wrapped, then your creation is enclosed in a cool protective package that you pump air into to cushion it on the trip home. There's also the much more involved Chicken Ramen Factory, a 90-minute session where participants make the noodles from scratch.

A warning: Cup Noodle Museum, educational as it is, is extremely popular with school groups and was packed with them on the weekday I visited.

beaten by the authorities, imprisoned, and blocked from leaving the country. In the process, he's become one of China's most internationally known figures, a fame that has partially protected him.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying declined comment on the award,

ARTISTS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei walks near a playground outside a shopping mall in Beijing. Amnesty International awarded its top honor to Ai, who has spent years shining light on his country's restrictive political atmosphere, and to U.S. folk singer Joan Baez for her civil-rights activism. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

but said China hopes Amnesty can regard China "objectively."

Ai made his first big splash by helping design Beijing's iconic Bird's Nest stadium for the 2008 Summer Olympics. He fell afoul of Chinese authorities after taking up causes such as those of parents angry over what they said was shoddy construction of schools that collapsed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, killing hundreds of children.

Ai said he hasn't had a passport since his 2011 arrest for tax evasion, which he has called politically motivated, but still hoped he would be able to attend the May 21 award ceremony in Berlin.

Previous award winners include dissident Aung San Suu Kyi and rock band U2.

Associated Press writer Louise Watt contributed to this report.

#### Fiji reclaims Hong Kong 7s title beating NZ 33-19 in final

Continued from page 8

gifted Domolailai the fifth and last try for Fiji.

"That's a great Fijian side," New Zealand coach Gordon Tietjens said. "They defended really well and a couple of length-of-the-field tries killed us."

Fiji did well merely to survive its quarterfinal. It led England 14-5 with a

penalty try, then lost a man to the sin-bin, too. England, at 14-12 down, gave James Rodwell a chance in the right corner, but Rawaca pulled off a brilliant try-saving tackle.

Fiji blasted to a 21-0 lead against South Africa in the semifinals then just managed to hold on 21-15 in another thriller. South Africa finished third, beating Samoa 26-5.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

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Doors open: 5:15pm • Social hour: 5:30-6:30 pm

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