

Chinese hospital opens smog treatment clinic

BEIJING (AP) — A doctor says a hospital in southwest China has opened a clinic for patients who are suffering symptoms related to smog. The clinic highlights how big a concern pollution has become for Chinese. One public health expert suggested hospitals may follow suit to cash in on the country's notorious smog. Within a week-and-a-half of opening, the clinic at the Chengdu No. 7 People's Hospital had already treated more than 100 patients. Doctor Wang Qixun said they decided to set the clinic up because the hospital had seen the number of smog-related patients surge. Pan Xiaochuan, a professor at Peking University's School of Public Health, suggested it may be a publicity stunt aimed at increasing the hospital's coffers.

Inter-Korean factory park a tough sell to outsiders

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The two Koreas have taken an initial step to open their jointly run industrial park to overseas investors. But foreigners who toured the complex recently say the compound in North Korea remains a tough sell despite its cheap labor. The director of the London-based independent policy institute Chatham House, Paola Subacchi, says North Korea's government needs to change to attract overseas investors. The tour occurred a week after North Korea executed Jang Song Thaek, the powerful uncle of its leader, Kim Jong Un. The industrial park combines South Korean capital and technology with cheap North Korean labor. Operations at the Kaesong complex were halted in April when North Korea withdrew its workers amid tensions over its threats of nuclear war. The complex reopened in September.

Thailand tops SEA Games medal tally

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — The 27th Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) ended with Thailand topping the medals table with 107 golds, ahead of host Myanmar with 86. Thailand also earned 94 silver medals and 81 bronze, while Myanmar's silver tally was 62 with 85 bronze medals. Vietnam's 73 golds were good for third place. Highlights for Thailand included gold medals in football, futsal, and both men's and women's volleyball. Host Myanmar had set an ambitious target of 100 gold medals, but its 86 represented a huge improvement over its last outing in the biennial games when it won just 16. Indonesia, the region's largest country which topped the medal table when it hosted the last games, finished fourth with 64 golds, 84 silvers, and 111 bronze medals. The SEA Games, the region's largest sporting event, brings together athletes from 11 nations every two years. It was the first time in more than two decades that Myanmar hosted the event. More than 6,000 athletes took part.

China's frugality drive now targets fancy funerals

BEIJING (AP) — China's ruling Communist Party is banning members from holding lavish funerals for their relatives as part of a drive against waste, corruption, and pomp. The ban was contained in a party circular that also forbade members from using funerals to collect condolence money from attendees. Such gifts are intended to defray costs, but often serve instead as bribes for favors. Lavish funerals are a way of asserting one's wealth and social status in China and often feature paid mourners, uniformed marching bands, and motorcades of limousines. China's president and party leader Xi Jinping has already issued a five-year moratorium on the construction of new government buildings and the use of public funds for lavish banquets and expensive gifts such as mooncakes.

Aquino won't let Philippine energy secretary quit

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — President Benigno Aquino III has rejected the Philippine energy secretary's offer to resign for failing to meet his self-imposed target to restore power in all typhoon-ravaged towns by Christmas Eve, an official said. Aquino instead praised Jericho Petilla for "excellent performance" for re-energizing 317 of 320 towns that lost power after Typhoon Haiyan (also known as Typhoon Yolanda) hit on November 8, 2013, presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said. It was originally estimated it would take up to six months to restore power, but Petilla managed to do most of the work in 40 days, he said. Haiyan's ferocious wind and storm surges knocked down thousands of transmission towers and electric posts, including in worst-hit Tacloban city in Leyte province, where a major geothermal plant was damaged.

Beijing bun shop gets China's president as diner

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping dropped in unexpectedly at a traditional Beijing bun shop, where he queued up, ordered, and paid for a simple lunch of buns stuffed with pork and onions, green vegetables, and stewed pig livers and intestines. Such visits are extremely rare — if not unheard of — for top Chinese leaders, who are usually surrounded by heavy security and are not known for mingling with the public other than at scheduled events. After spotting Xi, fellow diners took photos of the president and shared them on China's social media. State media reposted the photos on their microblog accounts, and the official Xinhua News Agency reported about Xi's lunch on its Chinese-language news site. "Had it not been for the photos, it would be incredulous to believe Xi, as a dignified president and party chief, should eat at a bun shop," author Wu Xiqi wrote in an editorial carried by the ruling Communist Party's official news site. "Xi's act has subverted the traditional image of Chinese officials, ushering a warm, people-first gust of wind that is very touching indeed." The manager of the dumpling shop, who gave only her family name, He, said Xi and a small entourage arrived at the no-frills eatery in western Beijing without prior notification. She said Xi paid 21 yuan (\$3.40) for his lunch.



HISTORICAL RECORD. A guide uses candles to illuminate the interior of a cave that scientists say reveals a history of ancient tsunamis in Lhong, Aceh province, Indonesia. The cave discovered near the source of the 2004 massive earthquake-spawned tsunami in Indonesia contains the footprints of past gigantic waves dating up to 7,500 years ago, a rare natural record suggesting future generations living in the coastal area must stay prepared because disasters can occur in relatively short bursts or after long lulls. (AP Photo/Heri Juanda)

Cave in Indonesia reveals history of ancient tsunamis

By Margie Mason
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A cave discovered near the source of Indonesia's massive earthquake-spawned tsunami contains the footprints of past gigantic waves dating up to 7,500 years ago, a rare natural record that suggests the next disaster could be centuries away — or perhaps only decades.

The findings provide the longest and most detailed timeline for tsunamis that have occurred off the far western tip of Sumatra island in Aceh province. That's where 100-foot waves triggered by a magnitude-9.1 earthquake on December 26, 2004 killed 230,000 people in several countries, more than half of them in Indonesia.

The limestone cave, located within a couple hundred yards of the coast near Banda Aceh, is about three feet above knee-high tide and protected from storms and wind. Only huge waves that inundate the coastal area are able to gush inside.

Researchers in 2011 uncovered seabed sand deposits that were swept into the cave over thousands of years and neatly layered between bat droppings like a geological cake. Radiocarbon analysis of materials, including clamshells and the remains of microscopic organisms, provided evidence of 11 tsunamis before 2004.

The disasters were by no means evenly spaced, said lead researcher Charles Rubin from the Earth Observatory of Singapore. The last one occurred about 2,800 years ago, but there were four others in the preceding 500 years.

And it's possible there were others.

Researchers know, for instance, that there were two mammoth earthquakes in the region around 1393 and 1450. Rubin said a big tsunami could have carried away evidence of other events through erosion.

The scientists are still working to determine the size of the waves that entered the cave.


"The take-home message is perhaps that the 2004 event doesn't mean it won't happen for another 500 years," said Rubin, who added that the cave was discovered by chance and not part of planned field work. "We did see them clustered together closer in time. I wouldn't put out a warning that we're going to have an earthquake, but it shows that the timing is really variable."

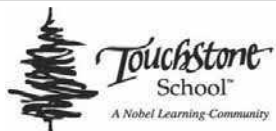
The quake that triggered the 2004 tsunami surprised scientists because the fault that unleashed the megathrust temblor had been quiet for hundreds of years. And since the last big earthquake had struck more than 500 years earlier, there was no surviving oral history that could have helped people understand the risk.

Since 2004, much research has been done to try to learn about the area's past by examining sand deposits, uplifted coral, and GPS data.

"The findings are very significant," Katrin Monecke, a geosciences professor at Wellesley College in Massachusetts wrote in an e-mail. She worked on tsunami sand deposits discovered in marshes in the area, but was not involved with the cave research, which was presented at an American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco. "The sand sheets in the cave cover a very long time span and give an excellent idea about earthquake frequen-

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