



New body found from sunken South Korean ferry

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A victim from the sunken South Korea ferry has been retrieved in waters 25 miles from the capsized vessel, raising the death toll to 289, according to officials. It was the first body recovered since May 21. A government task force said in a statement that fingerprint scans identified the body as one of the passengers from the ferry that sank April 16. Another 15 people remain missing. Heavy objects like desks and cabinets have made it difficult for divers to navigate through unsearched parts of the ferry. They have been cutting open parts of the ship exterior to make searches easier. The victim, whose surname was Cho, was travelling with his family to the southern resort island of Jeju. His wife and 11-year-old son have already been found dead while his seven-year-old son was rescued, according to the task force. Officials said Cho was born in 1970, making him either 43 or 44. Most of the ferry victims were students from a single high school near Seoul who were on a school trip to Jeju.

Official says disaster cost quadrupled in three decades

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — A senior European official says the average annual cost of natural disasters has quadrupled over the last three decades and that it makes economic sense to boost spending on preparedness. European commissioner Kristina Georgieva told a disaster risk-reduction conference of the Asia-Europe Meeting that costs related to natural disasters have increased from \$50 billion a year in the 1980s to \$200 billion in the last decade. She said only four percent of spending for disasters today goes to prevention and preparedness, with 96 percent spent on response. But, she said, evidence shows every dollar spent on prevention brings at least \$4 in savings on damage. About 200 participants from 49 countries and organizations gathered in Manila to discuss ways to increase disaster resilience.

Missing Thai tanker found after pirates steal oil

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Thai tanker that went missing after leaving Singapore was released by the pirates who stole its oil cargo, according to a maritime watchdog. The International Maritime Bureau said it was informed by the ship's owner that *Mt Orapin 4* was released and safely arrived at Sri Racha Port in Thailand. The ship's owner lost contact with the vessel and its 14 crew members after it left Singapore. The ship was due at the Indonesian port of Pontianak within two days but failed to arrive. "Pirates hijacked and stole the tanker's oil cargo onboard and destroyed the communication equipment. The crew and vessel are safe," said Noel Choong, who heads the bureau's piracy reporting center in Kuala Lumpur. No further details were available. Last month, a Thai ship and a Singapore tanker carrying diesel were also attacked by pirates after they left Singapore. Pirates stole the cargo before releasing the ships.

Seven die in Cambodia after looking for money in well

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Seven people died from a lack of oxygen after climbing down a well in Cambodia to retrieve about 75 cents, according to police and relatives. The incident happened in a remote area of the northwestern province of Siem Reap when an 11-year-old boy and six other people went into the well to collect 3,000 riel (75 cents). The boy's older sister, Che Chhan, said their father had accidentally dropped the money when taking water. She said her 13-year-old sister and 15-year-old brother also died, as well as four of her neighbors. "My youngest brother thought the amount of money was huge for poor people like us," Che Chhan said by phone. Police officer Muy Norn said the victims died due to a lack of oxygen at the bottom of the 16-foot-deep well. Cambodia is one of the world's poorest countries.

Taiwan scholar turned away on arrival in Hong Kong

BEIJING (AP) — A Taiwanese academic says he was turned away by Hong Kong immigration officials after he flew to the territory to speak at a conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement. Tseng Chien-yuan said he was told that the central government in Beijing had issued an order banning him from the city. Hong Kong is a former British colony that retains its own laws and civil liberties, but mainland China controls immigration and external security. Tseng's rejection underscores China's extreme sensitivity toward commemorations of the bloody crushing of the 1989 student-led movement centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Hong Kong secretary of security Lai Tung-kwok told reporters he couldn't comment on individual cases, but that officers had to turn away those who didn't meet "relevant requirements."

Brooklyn Nets' Andray Blatche now a Filipino

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Philippine officials say Brooklyn Nets player Andray Blatche has been granted Filipino citizenship so he can play for the national team in the FIBA World Cup this year. Presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said President Benigno Aquino III has signed a law granting citizenship to the U.S.-born Blatche. Senator Edgardo Angara, the main author of the law, says Filipinos are a "sports-loving nation with a distinct affection for basketball." He says the 6'11" Blatche, a power forward and center, can make "significant contributions to Philippine basketball." The International Basketball Federation, or FIBA, allows each team to have one naturalized player per tournament. The Philippines is competing at the World Cup for the first time in 35 years. Blatche averaged 11.2 points and 5.3 rebounds per game this season for Brooklyn.



PRIDE IN JAPAN. George Takei, right, speaks with his husband Brad during an interview before a reception at U.S. ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy's official residence in Tokyo. Takei said he needed courage and anger to come out as gay and to join the equal-rights movement for sexual minorities in the U.S., and he hopes his Japanese counterparts will do the same to make their society more equal. Takei, 77, was in Japan to attend embassy-organized events marking Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month in the U.S. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi, Pool)

George Takei sees gay pride beginning in Japan

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — George Takei said he needed courage and anger to come out as gay and to join the equal-rights movement for sexual minorities in the U.S., and he hopes his Japanese counterparts will do the same to make their society more equal.

Takei said he has noticed a movement beginning in Japan, though the country of his ancestry has a long way to go. He said Japanese people need to fight for their own rights and they need to be a bit angry, too.

The "Star Trek" actor also known for his gay- and civil-rights activism, said he was encouraged to have met with Japanese activists for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights, and even some of their parents fighting for their children.

"They have to have courage to come out and share their lives honestly," Takei said. Once they get a ball rolling, more movement would follow, like "a ripple effect" that spreads, he added. "So I'm optimistic. I do think that Japan will be one of the nations that have equality and that too will serve as an example for other Asian nations."

In a country where conformity is highly required, many sexual minorities still fear discrimination at work and bullying at schools, and many don't come out. Around the Asia-Pacific region, only New Zealand has legalized same-sex marriage.

Takei, 77, was in Japan to attend embassy-organized events marking LGBT Pride Month

in the U.S. He later toasted gay rights at a reception hosted by U.S. ambassador Caroline Kennedy attended by about 160 people, including Japan's first lady Akie Abe.

Delighted by receiving a miniature of *Starship Enterprise* from Kennedy before the reception, Takei said it was perfect for the occasion: "That is our Utopian future. This *Enterprise* (starship in *Star Trek*) is a metaphor of Starship Earth with all of its diversity — not only the diversity of race and culture and history but also the unseen diversity of orientation, all coming together working in concert for a better future. And that is what we are doing here tonight."

At a U.S. Embassy-sponsored talk, Takei said he was silent for decades due to fear of hurting his acting career. But he came out in 2005 when then-California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger rejected a bill legalizing same-sex marriage. A strong believer of civil liberty coming from his upbringing as a Japanese American who spent part of his childhood in an internment camp with his family during World War II, Takei said he had to speak up.

He and his longtime partner, Brad, were married in 2008. Takei said they chose to marry in a public ceremony for the sake of diversity and democracy.

The U.S. has come a long way with more states recognizing same-sex marriages and banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but further effort is needed to cover all 50 states, Kennedy said.

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China Renminbi	6.2108
Fijian Dollar	1.8376
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7516
Indian Rupee	59.773
Indonesian Rupiah	11796
Iranian Rial	25446
Japanese Yen	102.043
Laos New Kip	8063.6
Malaysian Ringgit	3.2185
Nepal Rupee	95.301
Pakistani Rupee	98.275
Papua N.G. Kina	2.4444
Philippine Peso	43.79
Russian Ruble	34.408
Saudi Riyal	3.7506
Singapore Dollar	1.2511
South Korean Won	1017.9
Sri Lankan Rupee	130.25
Taiwan Dollar	30.021
Thai Baht	32.375
Vietnam Dong	21223