



Tiny bird long thought extinct rediscovered in Myanmar

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Scientists say a tiny brown bird long thought to be extinct has been rediscovered in Myanmar's grasslands, but its fragmented habitat is threatened by human encroachment. The Jerdon's babbler was first discovered in the 1860s, but had not been reported in 74 years. A team of scientists from the Wildlife Conservation Society, Myanmar's Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, and the National University of Singapore said they found the sparrow-sized bird last May after playing a recording of its unique song and getting an answer. In the following 48 hours they found several other babblers in the same area. "The degradation of these vast grasslands had led many to consider this subspecies of Jerdon's Babbler extinct," Colin Poole, director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's regional conservation hub in Singapore, said in a statement. He said the discovery proves that the species — and its habitat — still exists. The scientists said blood samples will be tested to see if the babbler should be considered a full species. If the tests come back positive, they believe the species will be exclusive to Myanmar.

Bangladesh orders diplomat to leave for smuggling gold

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh's government has ordered a North Korean diplomat to leave the country after discovering \$1.4 million of unauthorized gold in his bag when he arrived at Dhaka's airport, according to a foreign ministry official. The ministry summoned North Korean ambassador Ri Song Hyon and gave him a 72-hour deadline to send the diplomat, Son Young Nam, back home, the official said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. Local media, citing unidentified sources, reported that Son, the embassy's first secretary for commercial and economic affairs, had already left the country secretly. The 59 pounds of undeclared gold was seized from Son at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, police said. No charges were lodged against Son because of his diplomatic immunity, and he was eventually handed over to officials from the North Korean Embassy, said Rashidul Islam Khan, commanding officer of the airport's armed police battalion.

Higher food prices, typhoon worsen poverty in Philippines

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Officials say poverty worsened in the Philippines in the first half of 2014 due to a rapid rise in food prices and the lingering effects of a killer typhoon. Socio-economic planning secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the poverty incidence among Filipinos rose by 1.2 percent to 25.8 percent in the first half of last year from the same period in 2013. He says high food prices, particularly of the staple rice, and effects of Typhoon Haiyan (also known as Typhoon Yolanda) that devastated the central Philippines in 2013, wiped out per capita income gains despite rapid economic growth last year. Rice prices rose 11.9 percent in the first half of 2014 as supplies tightened due to lean harvests and lower imports.

Former Sri Lankan defense secretary banned from travel

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A Sri Lankan court has barred a once-powerful former defense secretary from leaving the country as police investigate a large weapons cache aboard a ship that operated under his purview. Police said a court in the southern town of Galle imposed the travel ban on Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, a brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Police raided the ship in Galle harbor soon after Mahinda Rajapaksa lost a presidential election in January and found more than 3,000 automatic and semi-automatic weapons on board. They said the weapons were for a private security firm guarding the seas against pirates. Opposition parties have questioned the legality of the weapons cache. Gotabhaya played a key role in defeating ethnic Tamil rebels in a civil war during his brother's presidency.

South Korea renews license of second-oldest nuclear plant

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea has renewed a license of its second-oldest nuclear power plant until 2022. The Nuclear Safety and Security Commission said seven of nine commissioners voted to approve to restart the Wolsong No. 1 reactor located in Gyeongju city, 170 miles south of Seoul. It was South Korea's first such decision since the meltdowns at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi reactors in 2011 raised safety concerns. The nuclear regulator said it reviewed the plant's safety in the event of natural disaster and other legal standards. South Koreans were sharply divided over the fate of the plant that had operated for 30 years until its license expired in 2012. Nuclear energy provides about one-third of the country's electricity.

China's famed Shaolin temple plans big project in Australia

BEIJING (AP) — China's Shaolin Temple, historically known for its martial arts traditions, but which recently gained a reputation for aggressive commercialization, is planning to build a \$297 million complex in Australia that would include a temple, a hotel, a kung fu academy, and a golf course. The Shoalhaven City Council in New South Wales state said the developer, Shaolin Temple Foundation Australia, finalized a land purchase at Comberton Grange for what will be known as Shaolin Village. Mayor Joanna Gash said the city council and the state government both approved the concept plan for the project, which is to include a temple sanctuary with resident monks, a live-in kung fu academy, a 500-bed four-star hotel, and a 27-hole golf course. Planning officials rejected a residential component, but the developer hopes to restore it, according to media reports. The temple, built in the late fifth century and located in central China's Henan province, has rapidly commercialized itself under abbot Shi Yongxin over the past decade. Shi has defended it as a means to preserve the temple and its Buddhist cultures.



SOY SAUCE SAVED. Michihiro Kono, president of Yagisawa Shoten Co., holds his company's soy sauce bottle, named the "Miracle," at his company's new headquarters in Rikuzentakata, Iwate prefecture, northeastern Japan. The traditional soy sauce maker, destroyed by a giant tsunami four years ago, has made a comeback, defying tsunami-scale odds. The secret lies in the little white bottle that holds the special ingredients that were passed down for decades. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Soy sauce makes 'miracle' comeback in tsunami-wrecked Japan

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

RIKUZENTAKATA, Japan — When the tsunami warning sounded, workers at a two-centuries-old soy sauce maker in northeastern Japan ran up a nearby hill to a shrine for safety, and watched in disbelief as towering waters swallowed their factory.

They all believed the business, started in 1807, and its precious fungal cultures that give soy sauce its unique taste, were lost forever. Everyone except for Michihiro Kono, the ninth-generation son of the founding family.

Four years later, Yagisawa Shoten Co. has been saved through Kono's conviction, crowd-funding, and the unexpected survival of its vital ingredient.

"If you don't give up, no matter how painful it gets, there will always be a way," said 41-year-old Kono.

The March 11, 2011 tsunami killed nearly 19,000 people and set off meltdowns at a nuclear plant in the prefecture of Fukushima. In Rikuzentakata, Iwate prefecture, where Yagisawa is based, nearly 1,800 people were killed as sweeping waters reached as high as 55 feet. Four years later, some 4,000 people still live in temporary housing in Rikuzentakata, mostly makeshift garage-like buildings.

Taking over as president from his father shortly after the disaster, Kono kept the company going even when it didn't have a single product to sell. The tsunami wiped out not only the factory, but also the entire inventory. The damage was estimated at 220 million yen (\$2 million).

As word of historic Yagisawa's plight

spread, it got a lifeline from crowd-funding site Music Securities Inc. in Tokyo, which raised 150 million yen (\$1.5 million) from sympathizers across the nation. Each supporter gave 10,000 yen (\$100), half of it as investment and half as a straight donation. The company also received some government aid.

"We are a company in the boondocks and so we didn't know that much about crowd-funding. We did not have a very good image (of crowd-funding). We thought of takeovers like vulture funds," said Kono. "But it turned out to be a great system for a company like us."

From the start, Kono kept paying the salaries of his 38 workers, more than half of them women, and initially asked them to do volunteer work, distributing emergency food and clothing to tsunami victims. He believed a person without work would lose the mental energy to keep going.

Kiyoko Araki, 55, who lost her sister to the tsunami and still lives in temporary housing, recalled how grateful she was she could keep busy. These days, she is happily packing boxes with bottles of soy sauce for shipment.

A pungent scent wafts from the nearby six-ton vats filled with the dark sauce. What's wonderful about making soy sauce is that it takes so long to make each product, each process requiring handcraft-quality care, Araki said.

"And soy sauce is seasoning every home needs," she said proudly.

Six other Yagisawa employees lost a family member to the tsunami. One employee died while doing his work as a volunteer fireman.

By May 2011, Yagisawa was selling soy sauce again, but products that were made by

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Fijian Dollar	2.0682
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7657
Indian Rupee	62.966
Indonesian Rupiah	13205
Iranian Rial	27669
Japanese Yen	121.4
Laos New Kip	8125.5
Malaysian Ringgit	3.6855
Nepal Rupee	100.46
Pakistani Rupee	101.77
Papua N.G. Kina	2.6351
Philippine Peso	44.29
Russian Ruble	62.234
Saudi Riyal	3.7503
Singapore Dollar	1.3927
South Korean Won	1128.7
Sri Lankan Rupee	133.05
Taiwan Dollar	31.621
Thai Baht	32.925
Vietnam Dong	21390