



Toho sues U.S. studio, alleges Godzilla copyright violation

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese movie studio Toho Co. is suing Voltage Pictures and director Nacho Vigalondo, complaining of copyright and trademark infringements in an upcoming film. Toho spokesman Makoto Hanari said a lawsuit was filed in a California court, but declined to discuss details. Voltage Pictures president and chief operating officer Jonathan Deckter declined to comment. Toho created Godzilla with its 1954 classic film, owns the rights to the character, and licenses it out for figures and video games, as well as Hollywood remakes, such as last year's *Godzilla* movie directed by Gareth Edwards. The current complaint is about what Los-Angeles-based Voltage is creating for Vigalondo's upcoming film, *Colossal*, that Toho says uses Godzilla images without permission or payment.

Myanmar president signs off on contested population law

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Myanmar's president has signed off on a law requiring some mothers to space their children three years apart despite objections by a visiting senior U.S. diplomat and rights activists, who worry it could be used not only to repress women, but also religious and ethnic minorities. The Population Control Health Care Bill — drafted under pressure from hardline Buddhist monks with a staunchly anti-Muslim agenda — was passed by parliamentarians in May. U.S. deputy secretary of state Anthony Blinken said he warned Myanmar leaders during face-to-face talks about the dangers of the bill. Hours after the diplomat left, state-run media announced President Thein Sein had signed it into law. As predominantly Buddhist Myanmar started moving from dictatorship to democracy four years ago, newfound freedoms of expression lifted the lid on deep-seated hatred for minority Muslims — including Rohingya Muslims now arriving on Southeast Asian shores in crowded, rickety boats. The population law — which carries no punitive measures — gives regional authorities the power to implement birth-spacing guidelines in areas with high rates of population growth.

IMF official says China's yuan no longer undervalued

BEIJING (AP) — An official of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says it believes China's currency is no longer undervalued — a stance that might help Beijing in its wrangling with Washington over exchange rate controls. The IMF's first deputy managing director, David Lipton, also said Beijing should work toward having a floating exchange rate in two to three years. Lipton spoke after meeting Chinese officials to discuss economic and financial policy. The United States and some other governments have complained for years that China suppresses the value of its currency, the yuan, giving its exporters an unfair price advantage and hurting their foreign competitors. Referring to the yuan, Lipton said that after recent changes in global exchange rates, "We believe that it is no longer undervalued."

India appoints first transgender head of college

KOLKATA, India (AP) — India has for the first time appointed a transgender as the principal of a women's college. Manabi Banerjee will head the Krishnagar Women's College in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal. According to local official Dipak K. Kar, Banerjee is expected to start her new job on June 9. India's transgender activists have hailed the decision as a proud day for the community that usually faces discrimination. Last year, India's Supreme Court declared the transgender community as a legal third gender, granting them minority rights and privileges to education, employment, and health benefits.

Vietnam detains two South Koreans in scaffolding collapse

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Police in central Vietnam have detained two South Korean managers for the Samsung Group over a scaffolding collapse in March that killed 13 workers and injured dozens. Col. Phan Ke Hien, a spokesman for the Ha Tinh provincial police, said Lee Jae-myong and Kim Jong-wook are accused of violating labor safety regulations, which carries a penalty of up to 12 years in prison. All of the victims were Vietnamese subcontractors who were working on a seaport breakwater project in the province, about 250 miles south of Hanoi. Samsung C&T Vietnam, a unit of South Korea's Samsung Group, is the contractor. State-controlled media said the workers began to flee when the scaffolding started to shake, but Lee and Kim urged them to stay. The Son Duong seaport is part of the Vung Ang economic zone, where Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corp. is building a multibillion-dollar steel complex.

Indian nurse dies after 42 years in coma after rape

MUMBAI, India (AP) — A Mumbai nurse who was in a vegetative state for 42 years after being sexually assaulted while working in a hospital has died, according to authorities. Aruna Shanbaug, 67, suffered severe brain damage when she was sodomized and strangled with a metal chain by a hospital worker in 1973. The man, a ward attendant, left her to die in the hospital's basement, where she was found 11 hours later. She was 25 years old at the time. Shanbaug was diagnosed with pneumonia in May and was on a life-support system, said Pravin Bangar, medical superintendent at Mumbai's King Edward Memorial Hospital. Shanbaug's case sparked a debate over India's euthanasia laws after a Mumbai-based author and friend of the nurse petitioned the courts to stop force-feeding her through a tube so her suffering would not be prolonged. India's Supreme Court rejected the petition filed by Pinki Virani, who had sought euthanasia for Shanbaug, saying the court should "end her unbearable agony." The petition was opposed by nurses at the hospital, who took turns caring for her for more than four decades after Shanbaug's family said they were unable to support her. The attacker was released after serving a seven-year jail term.



CULTIVATING COFFEE CULTURE. A barista brews coffee at a Blue Bottle coffee shop in Tokyo. Japan, famous for green tea, is welcoming artisanal American coffee roaster Blue Bottle with long lines that have at times meant a four-hour wait for a cup. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

Artsy coffee chain Blue Bottle brews long queues in Tokyo

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Japan, famous for green tea, is welcoming artisanal American coffee roaster Blue Bottle with long lines that have at times meant a four-hour wait for a cup.

The company, which began in Oakland, California in 2002, hopes its early popularity is more than a passing fad. Japan's consumer culture is littered with manias for western food imports: pancakes, popcorn, doughnuts, even Taco Bell.

Success in Japan is important for Blue Bottle, which operates 17 cafés in the San Francisco Bay area, New York, and Los Angeles. Japan is its first foray outside of the U.S. Blue Bottle raised nearly \$26 million last year to invest in expansion, including financing from Silicon Valley executives, setting the stage for a test of whether an artsy gourmet coffee chain can go big.

Founder James Freeman, a musician, was inspired by Japan's old-style *kissaten* coffee shops: tiny dimly-lit establishments, with good music and a barista behind a wooden counter. Think places for quiet serious thinking and real drip coffee, not sweet, frivolous drinks.

"We care about every part of the coffee. We call it from seed to cup," said Saki Igawa, the business operations manager for Blue Bottle in Japan.

Attention to detail that dovetails with aspects of Japanese culture accounts for part of the coffee chain's early popularity. The spread of Starbucks internationally, which has created a cookie-cutter coffee culture that some people want to trade up from, is another factor. Blue Bottle is also benefitting from the

image problems in Japan of fast-food chains and highly processed foods.

"It's a new era in eating out," said food industry consultant Jotaro Fujii, who contends that Blue Bottle's arrival and the decline of McDonald's in Japan is part of a bigger trend of consumer interest in the safety and quality of the entire food supply chain.

McDonald's is suffering declining popularity in Japan, a problem exacerbated after plastic pieces, and even a tooth, were found in its food last year, setting off outrage among consumers.

Upscale burger chain Shake Shack, which started as a hot dog stand in New York, is expected to arrive in Japan soon, said Fujii.

Such chains, including Blue Bottle, are likely to aim for 50 or at most 100 outlets in Japan, not the thousands that fast-food eateries such as McDonald's have achieved, he said.

Instead, they will focus on fortifying a brand image, which can lead to other kinds of lucrative businesses.

Although the prevalent image of Japan might be tea, it has long had plenty of affection for coffee.

Starbucks has been a hit since arriving in 1995. It now has more than 1,000 shops in Japan. Not a single prefecture (state) is without a Starbucks with one opening in holdout Tottori prefecture last month — which, not surprisingly, was welcomed with long lines.

Even convenience stores are serving freshly brewed coffee. Japan also invented "mangakissa," or a café-cum-library, where you can curl up with a comic book and sip on coffee for hours.

Continued on page 4

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 5/29

Bangladesh Taka	77.775
Cambodian Riel	4070.1
China Renminbi	6.1976
Fijian Dollar	2.0768
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7533
Indian Rupee	63.825
Indonesian Rupiah	13224
Iranian Rial	28690
Japanese Yen	123.96
Laos New Kip	8118.0
Malaysian Ringgit	3.6675
Nepal Rupee	102.35
Pakistani Rupee	102.0
Papua N.G. Kina	2.6914
Philippine Peso	44.585
Russian Ruble	52.267
Saudi Riyal	3.7502
Singapore Dollar	1.3494
South Korean Won	1108.2
Sri Lankan Rupee	133.92
Taiwan Dollar	30.695
Thai Baht	33.695
Vietnam Dong	21815