

New airport's internet room a closed window on North Korea

By Eric Talmadge
The Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — Pyongyang's shiny new airport building has all the features international travellers have come to expect, though some lose their luster upon closer examination. Case in point: Its internet room appears to be missing the internet.

On two recent trips through the airport by The Associated Press, the room's three terminals were either occupied by North Korean airport employees, making it impossible for others to use them, or were completely empty, with their keyboards removed. Attempts to open any browser with a mouse resulted in a failure to connect.

Maybe it was a temporary glitch. It's hard to say, since airport officials refused to comment to The AP.

But a quick check of the history on two of the terminals showed one was either empty or had been cleared, and the other had a record only of a visit to Naenara, the North's official website.

At first glance, internet at the airport would seem like quite a concession for a country that is almost completely sealed off from the World Wide Web.

Hardly any North Koreans have personal-use computers and most of those with online access can see only the country's domestic version of the web — an intranet that has only web-



FAÇADE OF MODERNITY. Computers with no keyboards are seen at an internet corner at the airport in Pyongyang, North Korea on August 24, 2015. The new airport building has just about everything, including an internet room. The problem is, it doesn't seem to work. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara)

sites that are sanctioned by the government and is for internal use only.

The internet itself can be seen only by a small number of elites, IT experts, or others with a clear need to use it, and always under close supervision.

The internet room at the airport, which opened a few months ago, is just part of efforts to give visitors the sense that North Korea is just like any other modern travel destination.

Arriving passengers see coffee, well-stocked souvenir shops, a DVD stand, information desk, and a slickly

produced billboard showing a crew of the nation's flag-carrier, Air Koryo, looking sharp in their blue and red uniforms. There are even two chocolate fountains, one for white chocolate and the other for dark.

Another nod to international norms can be seen right behind the internet room, in the smoking room.

In something almost never seen in the North, where just about every adult male who can afford it, including leader Kim Jong Un, is a smoker, the room has a big sign warning that the habit is hazardous to one's health.

Japan scraps Olympic logo over plagiarism allegation

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Tokyo Olympic organizers have decided to scrap the logo for the 2020 Games following another allegation its Japanese designer might have used copied materials.

Reversing their earlier support for designer Kenjiro Sano against allegations of plagiarizing the design, the organizers said the decision came after new accusations surfaced.

"We have reached a conclusion that it would be only appropriate for us to drop the logo and develop a new emblem," said Toshio Muto, director general of the Tokyo organizing committee. "At this point, we have decided that the logo cannot gain public support."

The logo has faced scrutiny since a Belgian designer took legal action saying it resembled one of his works that was created for a theater in Belgium.

Organizers had defended Sano during a news conference when they released his original design, which had been altered into its final shape, to stress its authenticity. That, instead, triggered fresh allegations over the initial "T" design.

Sano, 43, stood by his design, but offered to withdraw the logo during discussion with the organizers.

"I swear my design did not involve copies or plagiarism," Sano said in a statement on his website. "Any attempt of suspected copying or plagiarism should never be permitted."

Muto said the organizing committee will have another competition to decide a new logo "as soon as possible," though he did not give a schedule.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters before the announcement that the organizing committee was



EMBLEM ELIMINATED. The logo of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games is seen at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building in Tokyo. Tokyo Olympic organizers have decided to scrap the logo for the 2020 Games following another allegation that its Japanese designer might have used copied materials. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

him a "bad image" and reporting "as if all of my designs were copies."

He decided to pull the logo as "I have to protect my family and staff from persistent attacks and bashing over the ruckus," Sano said. "I feel the situation has become unbearable as a human being."

The latest suspicion surfaced when he was alleged to have taken a photo from someone else's website in materials used in Olympic logo presentations, including one at its launch, apparently without permission.

Sano allegedly lifted a photo of a Tokyo airport lobby posted on the internet and superimposed his logo on banners and signposts in the photo to show how it would look. Details in the two photos, including people on the floor and the size of the banners, were identical in footage shown by NHK.

Sano has previously acknowledged that eight of the 30 designs used for a brewery's promotional tote bags included copies of others' works. In those, however, he held his assistants responsible for having "traced" the images and he only apologized for the lack of oversight.

He also faces allegations that his design for a zoo in central Japan and another for a public museum outside Tokyo have close resemblance to others' works that had been published before him.

"I want Mr. Sano to provide an explanation. I feel like we have been betrayed," Tokyo governor Yoichi Masuzoe told reporters.



AUTUMN ASCENT. Japanese climber Nobukazu Kuriki poses with a Nepalese flag during a press conference in Kathmandu, Nepal. Nepal has opened Mount Everest to climbers for the first time since an earthquake-triggered avalanche in April killed 19 mountaineers and ended the popular spring climbing season. Kuriki will be the first to attempt to scale the world's highest peak since the quake. (AP Photo/Bikram Rai)

Nepal opens Everest to climbers for first time since avalanche

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Nepal has opened Mount Everest to climbers for the first time since an earthquake-triggered avalanche in April killed 19 mountaineers and ended the popular spring climbing season.

Japanese climber Nobukazu Kuriki will be the first to attempt to scale the world's highest peak since the quake. Nepal's tourism minister, Kripasur Sherpa, gave Kuriki his climbing permit at a ceremony in Kathmandu.

Kuriki plans to leave for the mountain by helicopter and reach the summit in mid-September. The autumn season is considered a difficult time to attempt Everest and is generally avoided by climbers.

"The main purpose of my climb is to spread the message that Nepal was safe for climbers and trekkers even after the earthquake," Kuriki told reporters.

It will be Kuriki's fifth attempt at Everest. His four previous bids to reach the top of the 29,035-foot mountain were unsuccessful. In his last attempt, in 2012, he lost nine fingers to frostbite.

Since April's earthquake, which killed nearly 9,000 people, Nepal has been desperate to bring back the tens of thousands of tourists who enjoy trekking the country's mountain trails and climbing its Himalayan peaks.

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