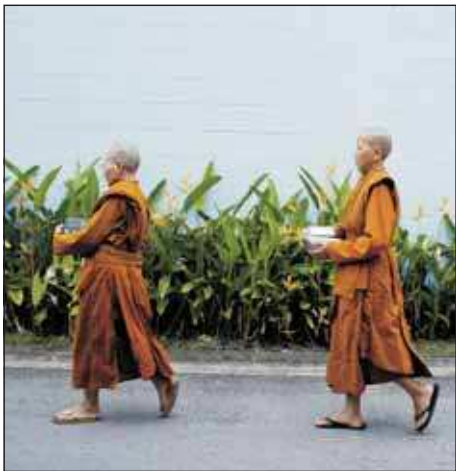


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'Rebel' Buddhist monks challenge status quo

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Experts concerned by invasive turtle

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Japan continues LLWS dominance

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Nintendo, Google spinoff Niantic in smartphone Pokémon game

By Elaine Kurtenbach
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Imagine coming out of your office, home, or school and getting an alert: A Pikachu is lurking behind a nearby tree, and the chase is on.

Japanese video-game company Nintendo Co., the Pokémon Co., and Google spinoff Niantic say they intend to transplant the virtual realities of the famous Pokémon “pocket monsters” into real-world locations with a smartphone app that players can use to catch, trade, and stage battles between the creatures.

Location-gaming app Pokémon GO is similar to Niantic’s “Ingress” real-world adventure game, which reports 12 million downloads. The Nintendo game will be released in 2016, initially as a free download.

Nintendo also created Pokémon GO Plus, a small, wearable Bluetooth device that will use vibrations and flashes to alert players to Pokémon lurking in their surroundings.

Pokémon, or Pocket Monsters, are a franchise that began in 1996, created by Japanese video-game developer Game Freak, which was acquired by Nintendo and also is involved in creating the new app. The best known of the imaginary creatures is likely the tubby, yellow Pikachu, with his lightning-strike tail, rosy cheeks, and brown-tipped rabbit ears.

The games call for players to catch and collect Pokémon, train them, and stage battles while pursuing various adventures. Aside from games, there are Pokémon cartoons, toys, and trading cards.

Niantic Inc. was founded as a Google subsidiary by Google Earth co-creator John Hanke.

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AUGMENTED REALITY. A Pokémon display of Pikachu hangs above Toy Fair 2014 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York on the opening day of the 111th American International Toy Fair. Japanese video-game company Nintendo Co., the Pokémon Co., and Google spinoff Niantic say they intend to transplant the virtual realities of the famous Pokémon “pocket monsters” into real-world locations with a smartphone app that players can use to catch, trade, and stage battles between the creatures. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II, File)

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