



Sakurajima volcano erupts spectacularly in Japan

TOKYO (AP) — A well-known volcano erupted in southern Japan with a fiery blast that sent lava rolling down its slope. Japan’s Meteorological Agency said Sakurajima on the island of Kyushu erupted at around 7:00pm on February 5. Japanese television showed an orange burst out of the side of the volcano, near the summit, accompanied by lightning-like flashes. Dark gray smoke billowed into the sky. The Meteorological Agency banned entry to the area, expanding an existing no-go zone around the crater to a 1.2-mile radius, according to public broadcaster NHK. There were no immediate reports of injuries. The eruption, while dramatic, was average compared to Sakurajima’s past eruptions, Kyoto University volcanologist Kazuhiro Ishihara told NHK. The mountain’s last major eruption was in September. The Japanese archipelago sits atop the Pacific “Ring of Fire” and has more than 100 volcanoes. The 2014 eruption of Mount Ontake in central Japan killed 57 people.

Tamil leaders call for U.N. help on 4,000 missing civilians

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka’s ethnic Tamil leaders have asked the top U.N. human-rights official to help determine the fate of more than 4,000 civilians reported missing in the country’s long civil war amid the new government’s assertion that most of them are probably dead. The U.N. official, Zeid Raad al-Hussein, met with the chief minister of Sri Lanka’s Northern Province, the center of the civil war, which ended in 2009. Zeid said he discussed several issues with chief minister C.V. Wigneswaran, including the missing people, detentions without trial, and military-occupied private land. He said he would take the issues up with the central government. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said most of those reported missing are probably dead.

China reports first case of imported Zika virus

BEIJING (AP) — China has reported its first case of the Zika virus in a man who recently travelled to Venezuela. The National Health and Family Planning Commission said the 34-year-old man from the southern city of Ganzhou was treated in Venezuela on January 28 before returning home on February 5 via Hong Kong and the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. The commission said the man was confirmed as having the Zika virus, but his temperature had returned to normal and a skin rash was receding. It said the virus is highly unlikely to spread in China due to low winter temperatures and a lack of mosquito activity, the primary avenue by which Zika spreads. Zika infections in pregnant women are suspected of causing a rare birth defect.

Leopard wanders into south Indian school, injures three

BANGALORE, India (AP) — Earlier this month, a leopard wandered into a school in southern India and injured three people as it tried to escape, officials said. Onlookers including TV news crews watched the chase, which lasted several hours until forest workers shot the big cat with a tranquilizer dart, according to the Press Trust of India news agency. The agency quoted school officials as saying the leopard was first seen on closed-circuit television before dawn inside the private Vibgyor School in Bangalore, and then disappeared into some surrounding bushes. The big cat later scaled a wall to re-enter the school grounds. It attacked and injured three people, including a veterinarian and a man who was trying to climb over a gate to get away, the agency reported. Police said the three were treated at a hospital.

Japan announces new sanctions on North Korea

TOKYO (AP) — Japan has announced it will impose new sanctions on North Korea to protest a rocket launch seen as a test of missile technology. The sanctions include expanded restrictions on travel between the two countries and a complete ban on visits by North Korean ships to Japanese ports, chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a news conference. He said the sanctions would be approved by the cabinet later and would also require legislative changes in parliament. North Korea launched a long-range rocket carrying what it said was an earth observation satellite into space. The launch, which came about a month after the country’s fourth nuclear test, was quickly condemned by world leaders as a potential threat to regional and global security. The U.S. Congress is also considering imposing more stringent sanctions on North Korea.

N. Korea orders military takeover of inter-Korean factories

PAJU, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has ordered a military takeover of a factory park that had been the last major symbol of cooperation with South Korea, saying Seoul’s earlier suspension of operations at the jointly run facility as punishment for the North’s recent rocket launch was a “dangerous declaration of war.” North Korea said it was responding to Seoul’s shutdown order by immediately deporting the hundreds of South Koreans who work at the complex just across the world’s most heavily armed border in the city of Kaesong, pulling out the tens of thousands of North Korean employees and freezing all South Korean assets. The North also said it was shutting down two crucial cross-border communication hotlines. An immediate worry in Seoul was whether all South Korean workers would be allowed to leave. Some analysts speculated that the North would hold onto some to get all the wages owed North Korean workers. The North’s moves significantly raised the stakes in a standoff that began with North Korea’s nuclear test in January, followed by a long-range rocket launch that outsiders see as a banned test of ballistic missile technology. South Korea responded by beginning work to suspend operations at the factory park, one of its harshest possible punishment options.



**MR. MONK DELIVERY.** Buddhist monk Kaichi Watanabe performs rituals for the Uematsu family, who lost a family member, during a memorial ceremony at a funeral hall in Yachiyo, east of Tokyo. In Japan, where communal ties to local Buddhist temples are fading, families have in recent years been able to go online to find a Buddhist monk to perform funerals and other rituals. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Monks delivered via Amazon as role of Japanese temples fade

By Mari Yamaguchi  
The Associated Press

YACHIYO, Japan — In Japan, where communal ties to local Buddhist temples are fading, families have in recent years been able to go online to find a Buddhist monk to perform funerals and other rituals.

But when Amazon Japan allowed a provider to offer *Obo-san bin*, or “Mr. Monk Delivery,” on its website, it shone a spotlight on the emerging trend and prompted a major Buddhist organization to criticize the internet marketer of commercializing religion.

A basic plan for a monk, transportation, and a donation offered by the Tokyo-based provider, Minrevi Co., one of dozens of emerging budget companies, costs 35,000 yen (\$300). Three other options are available for more money. The monks would typically go to a home, funeral hall, or a grave to perform the requested ceremony.

“Such a thing is allowed in no other country in the world. In this regard, we must say we are disappointed by an attitude toward religion by Amazon,” Akisato Saito, director of the Japan Buddhist Association, said in a statement.

Many Japanese, however, welcome the service as a consumer-friendly approach to Buddhist rituals, whose cost is often perceived as murky and overpriced. Buddhist-style memorial services offered by temples comparable to the “monk delivery” could cost 100,000 yen (\$830). Funerals are even more expensive and can cost well over 1 million yen (\$8,500).

Monk delivery services have emerged as many of Japan’s 75,000 temples are losing offerings and business with hereditary

members in their communities which traditionally have been the main source of financial support. That is threatening the survival of many temples in rural areas. In fact, some experts predict the majority of Japanese temples without income from tourism and other businesses are expected to close over the next several decades.

Minrevi spokesman Jumpei Masano says the service seems to attract those who want to have Buddhist funerals but are uneasy about the pricing system, and want to keep their distance from temples.

“Many people don’t have ties with temples and they have no idea where and how to arrange Buddhist rituals, while monks are increasingly concerned about their declining temple membership,” Masano said. “We can cater to the needs on both sides and hopefully we can bring them together.”

Some monks acknowledge that the growing business highlights the complacency of the Buddhist temples and their failure to reach out and adapt to the people’s needs.

“We do understand there are criticisms of us as well and we take them seriously. And we must ask ourselves if and how we can change,” said Hanyu Kakubo, public relations secretary for the Japan Buddhist Association.

When Yutaka Uematsu’s 17-year-old son Kakeru died more than a month ago after battling cancer, he searched the internet for a funeral service provider.

Uematsu didn’t consider asking his father’s family temple as he had heard the prices charged for a family member’s funeral were “outrageous.”

So he and his wife went to the Minrevi website and picked for their son a package at a

Continued on page 7

# HOST FAMILIES

Enrich your life by hosting a World Forestry Center visiting international researcher in your home for six months. Rent a room and gain so much from the experience.

Learn more on our website, <[www.worldforestry.org](http://www.worldforestry.org)>, or by contacting Shadia Duery at (503) 488-2110 or <[sduery@worldforestry.org](mailto:sduery@worldforestry.org)>.

*Must reside in Portland on public transit lines.*

## FREE HOME REPAIRS FOR PORTLAND SENIOR & DISABLED HOMEOWNERS

Plumbing • Electrical • Carpentry



Call (503) 501-5719 or visit <https://reachcdc.org>

Interpretation services available

Asian Currency Exchange Rates	
Units per U.S. dollar as of 2/12	
Bangladesh Taka	78.505
Cambodian Riel	4053.9
China Renminbi	6.5743
Fijian Dollar	2.1381
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7905
Indian Rupee	68.235
Indonesian Rupiah	13490
Iranian Rial	30187
Japanese Yen	112.93
Laos New Kip	8121.5
Malaysian Ringgit	4.164
Nepal Rupee	109.13
Pakistani Rupee	104.48
Papua N.G. Kina	3.028
Philippine Peso	47.608
Russian Ruble	79.124
Saudi Riyal	3.7509
Singapore Dollar	1.3971
South Korean Won	1211.5
Sri Lankan Rupee	144.03
Taiwan Dollar	33.016
Thai Baht	35.614
Vietnam Dong	22325