



Moon’s down-to-earth manner generates buzz

SEOUL, South Korea — Selfies, coffee, and a jacket were all that new South Korean President Moon Jae-in needed to powerfully project an image that he’s a down-to-earth leader. South Korean internet users shared photos of Moon waving at a presidential employee and taking off his own jacket at a luncheon. Images of Moon, without a jacket and holding a cup of coffee while cheerfully talking with his aides in the presidential garden, also generated a buzz. Many see Moon’s manner as a refreshing break from his disgraced, jailed predecessor, Park Geun-hye, whom critics saw as aloof and autocratic. Moon began his first full day in office by shaking hands and taking selfies with supporters near his private Seoul home before heading to the presidential Blue House. Moon’s aides say he will commute from his home for the first few days as workers finish furnishing the Blue House residential space for him. In a speech after he took the oath of office, Moon said he plans to eventually move out of the Blue House, which was seen as part of an attempt to be a more accessible leader. He instead plans to work at an office in nearby Gwanghwamun, near the square where millions took part in months of peaceful protests before Park was removed from office and arrested in March on corruption charges.

Cambodia breaks ground on first oil refinery

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for its first oil refinery, a \$620-million project to reduce spending on imported fuel. Suy Sem, the minister of mines and energy, said at the ceremony that the refinery, being built by an engineering unit of China National Petroleum Co., will be able to process 2 million tons of crude oil per year when it is completed in 2019. A second phase unit set for completion in 2022 will increase capacity to 5 million tons. The refinery, in Cambodia’s southwestern Preah Sihanouk province, will be a joint venture between Cambodia Petrochemical Co. and China’s Sino Great Wall International Engineering Co. Ltd. Suy Sem said most of the crude oil for the refinery would come from the Middle East, with some coming from Cambodia in the future. He said domestic demand for fuel is steadily increasing, with the country importing 1.8 million tons of fuel in 2015, a 6.7 percent increase over 2014. There are 14 local and international companies that currently import fuel oil, Suy Sem said.

Headgear approved for use by world basketball body

HONG KONG (AP) — Basketball’s international governing body has approved a new rule that will allow players to wear headgear that complies with their religious faith. The Switzerland-based body, known as FIBA, said the rule will take effect in games beginning October 1. Then, players can wear *hijabs*, turbans, and yarmulkes after a 20-year ban on head coverings that was initially imposed for safety reasons. FIBA member federations passed the rule at a congress in Hong Kong after studying the issue since 2014, and with several conditions on design and color. Headgear will be permitted under the following conditions: must be black, white, or the same dominant color as a team’s uniform; not cover any part of the face entirely or partially; and have “no opening/closing elements around the face and/or neck.”

North Korea vs. Malaysia soccer match rescheduled

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — North Korea has finally been approved to host a 2019 Asian Cup qualifying match against Malaysia following political tensions between the countries. The Asian Football Confederation said the game can go ahead in Pyongyang on June 8 after the Malaysian soccer federation confirmed it was not subject to “government travel restrictions.” Diplomatic tensions escalated amid investigations into the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s estranged half-brother in Kuala Lumpur. Both countries imposed travel bans on the other’s citizens. The original March 28 qualifier was postponed and a neutral venue sought. The match opens play for both teams in a four-nation Asian Cup qualifying group that includes Lebanon and Hong Kong.

715 pounds lighter, Egyptian woman leaves India

MUMBAI, India (AP) — An Egyptian woman who lost about 325 kilograms (715 pounds) after undergoing weight-loss surgery in an Indian hospital has left for the United Arab Emirates for long-term treatment. Eman Ahmed, who weighed more than 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds) when she was flown to Mumbai for treatment in February, was reportedly the world’s heaviest woman. Doctors who reduced the size of her stomach to help her lose weight said her treatment would continue at a hospital in Abu Dhabi. The 36-year-old from Alexandria has lymphedema, a condition that causes body tissue to swell. She had a stroke when she was 11, after which her weight gradually increased. A chartered aircraft took Ahmed and a team of nine doctors to Abu Dhabi.

Body of 85-year-old climber recovered from Mount Everest

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — The body of an 85-year-old climber who died attempting to regain his title as the oldest person to scale Mount Everest was flown to Kathmandu where family and supporters held a funeral. The death of Min Bahadur Sherchan has also revived concerns about allowing elderly people to attempt to scale mountain peaks where the conditions are harsh and oxygen levels are low. Sherchan’s body was flown by helicopter to Kathmandu, a day after the Nepali died at Everest base camp. At a community center, his family, friends, and supporters offered flowers and a colorful scarf as Buddhist monks chanted a religious hymn and burnt sandalwood incense. Sherchan first scaled Everest in May 2008 when he was 76 — at the time becoming the oldest climber to reach the top.



TACKLING TAISHAN. Tourists watch the sunset at the top of Mount Tai in Shandong province, China’s most sacred mountain. For centuries, emperors climbed Mount Tai to pay homage to heaven and earth. Philosopher Confucius is said to have stood at the towering top, looked down, and pronounced the world a small place indeed. (AP Photo/Louise Watt)

Climbing Mount Tai: 6,000 steps up China’s sacred mountain

By Louise Watt
The Associated Press

TAISHAN, China — Taishan, or Mount Tai, is China’s most sacred mountain. For centuries, emperors climbed it to pay homage to heaven and earth. Philosopher Confucius is said to have stood at the towering top, looked down, and pronounced the world a small place indeed.

While it isn’t one of China’s tallest mountains, the way to the top is still a challenge consisting of more than 6,000 stone steps, with the option of taking a cable car halfway. Walking the whole way can take anywhere from three to seven hours.

I’d heard stories about elderly groups and others resolutely marching up the mountain in the dark and arriving in time to see the sunrise, but I decided, with some friends, to start in the afternoon and see the sunrise after spending the night in a hotel at the top.

We entered through the Red Gate at the south foot of the mountain, stopping to look in temples with burning incense and at some of the hundreds of stone tablets that dot the way up. We were surrounded by serene greenery, punctuated every so often by a rousing round of mainland or Taiwanese pop music from tourists carrying personal stereo systems for all to hear.

Two seven- and nine-year-old brothers offered me a welcome excuse to rest from climbing when they asked “auntie,” one of the few foreigners on the mountain, to pose for a photo with them.

Then I continued to follow in the footsteps of the emperors. In 219 B.C.E., Qin Shi Huang,

the founder of the Qin Dynasty, held a ceremony on the summit to announce to the gods that he had successfully unified China.

For thousands of years, Taishan has been a source of inspiration for poets and thinkers, and a place to worship. The mountain is the most venerated of China’s five sacred mountains. This is because it is the easternmost, and in Chinese culture east is regarded as a sacred direction because that is where the sun and moon rise.

Confucius, whose hometown of Qufu is not too far away, declared from the summit: “Climb Mount Tai and the whole world looks small.” His words express how Mount Tai looks large against its low-lying surroundings, and also the more philosophical musing that the higher you climb, the greater your vision.

For me, the higher I climbed, the more steps I saw, until finally I got to the steps leading up to the cable car station. Of course, Confucius wouldn’t have taken the cable car, but I wasn’t Confucius. And two hours of climbing steps was enough of a climbing experience for me.

On top of the 5,069-foot mountain, lodging is limited. There are a few basic hotels, and travellers also come equipped with camping gear. We stayed in a hotel and paid 100 yuan (\$15) per person to sleep on mattresses in a room with 13 people. Outside our door, other guests slept in tents or rows of beds lining the corridors.

Another likely difference between my experience and that of Confucius: He probably didn’t climb the mountain at the same time as thousands of other people.

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Fijian Dollar	2.1135
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7939
Indian Rupee	64.31
Indonesian Rupiah	13330
Iranian Rial	32464
Japanese Yen	113.38
Laos New Kip	8199.9
Malaysian Ringgit	4.3457
Nepal Rupee	102.94
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Papua N.G. Kina	3.243
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Taiwan Dollar	30.172
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