



SUPERCENTENARIAN. Masazo Nonaka receives a certificate from Guinness World Records as the world's oldest living man at age 112 years, 259 days during a ceremony in Ashoro, on Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido. (Masanori Takei/Kyodo News via AP)

Oldest man likes soaking in Japan hot springs, eating sweets

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Masazo Nonaka has enjoyed soaking in northern Japan's hot springs for many years — probably longer than most people.

The supercentenarian, whose family has run a hot springs inn for four generations, was certified this month as the world's oldest living man, at age 112 years, 259 days.

Nonaka received the certificate from Guinness World Records in a ceremony at his home in Ashoro, on Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido, and celebrated with a big cake decorated with berries.

Born on July 25, 1905, Nonaka grew up in a large family and succeeded his parents running the inn. The 105-year-old inn is now run by his granddaughter Yuko. He regularly soaks in the springs and also enjoys eating sweets, especially cakes.

Nonaka, wearing a knit cap and a kimono-style jacket, flashed a smile and posed for a group photo with his family, making a victory sign with his right hand.

He dug into the cake with a spoon after it was cut, and said, "delicious," according to NHK public television.

"Thank you," he said.

His family members say Nonaka still moves about by himself in a wheelchair.

He reads a newspaper after breakfast every morning, and loves to watch sumo wrestling and samurai dramas on television. But his favorite pastime is soaking in the hot springs and relaxing.

Nonaka has outlived all seven of his siblings, as well as his wife and two of their five children.

He is one of about 67,800 centenarians in Japan, the fastest-aging country in the world, with the highest average life expectancy — 80.98 for men and 87.14 for women, according to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare.

Guinness says Nonaka replaced Francisco Olivera of Spain, who died earlier this year at age 113, as the world's oldest man.

A 117-year-old Japanese woman, Nabi Tajima, who is currently the oldest living person in Japan, is expected to be certified as the world's oldest person, replacing Violet Moss-Brown of Jamaica, who died in September at age 117.

Myanmar takes back one Rohingya family despite U.N. concerns

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar has accepted what appears to be the first five among some 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape military-led violence against the minority group, even though the United Nations says it's not yet safe for them to return home.

A government statement says five members of a family returned to western Rakhine state from the border area.

The statement said authorities determined whether they had lived in Myanmar and provided them with a national verification card. The card is a form of ID, but does not mean citizenship — something Rohingya have been denied in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where they've faced persecution for decades.

It said that the family was staying temporarily with relatives in Maungdaw town, the administrative center close to the border.

The statement did not say if any more repatriations are planned. Bangladesh has given Myanmar a list of more than 8,000 refugees to begin the repatriation, but it has been further delayed by a complicated verification process.

The two countries agreed in December to begin repatriating them in January, but they were delayed by concerns among aid workers and Rohingya that they would be forced to return and face unsafe conditions in Myanmar.

Hundreds of Rohingya were reportedly killed in the recent violence, and many houses and villages burned to the ground. The United Nations and the U.S. have described the army crackdown as "ethnic cleansing."

The U.N. refugee agency and Bangladesh finalized a memorandum of understanding that describes the repatriation process as "safe, voluntary, and dignified ... in line with international standards."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said it "considers that conditions in Myanmar are not yet conducive for returns to be safe, dignified, and sustainable. The responsibility for creating such conditions remains with the Myanmar authorities, and these must go beyond the preparation of physical infrastructure to facilitate logistical arrangements."

Earlier, Myanmar social welfare minister Win Myat Aye met with about 40 Rohingya refugees at the



REPATRIATING ROHINGYA. Myanmar's Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement minister Win Myat Aye arrives at Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. About 700,000 Rohingya who face severe discrimination in Myanmar have fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape a brutal army counterinsurgency campaign. Efforts are underway to arrange their return. (AP Photo/Suzauddin Rubel)

Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh for more than an hour, sometimes exchanging heated words.

A Rohingya leader, Abdur Rahim, said at least eight rape victims were among those who met with him. Rahim said the group presented 13 demands for the government to meet for their return to Myanmar.

Rahim said the group became angry when Win Myat Aye said the Rohingya refugees must accept national verification cards to be provided by Myanmar in which they state they are migrants from Bangladesh.

Rohingya Muslims have long been treated as outsiders in Myanmar, even though their families have lived in the country for generations. Nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless. They are denied freedom of movement and other basic rights.

Rahim said they demanded to be recognized as citizens of Myanmar before the repatriation starts and that their security arrangements be supervised by the United Nations.

Rohingya who have been repatriated in the past after previous refugee exoduses have been forced to live in camps in Myanmar.

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The Asian Reporter is published on the first & third Monday each month.

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