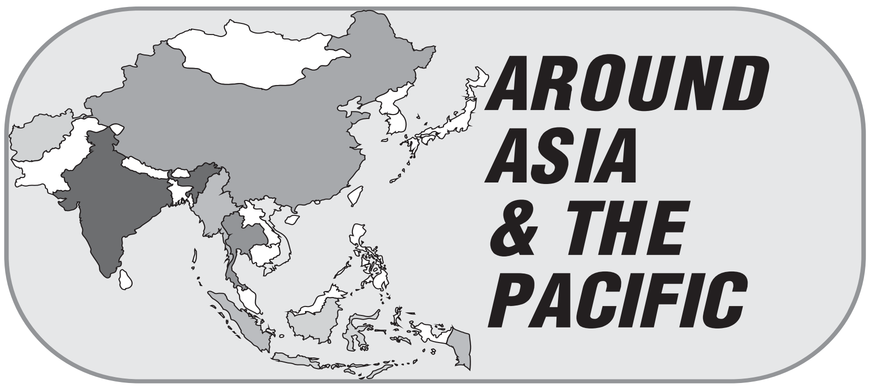

Panda takes excursion into town in China

BEIJING (AP) — A highly social giant panda out for a stroll surprised and delighted residents of a town in the southwestern Chinese province of Sichuan. The panda was first spotted wandering among houses in Wenchuan county, seemingly in search of food. She strolled beside a vegetable garden, trotted across a dirt road, and climbed a tree, apparently unfazed by the attention she drew from a large group of onlookers. Researchers at the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda confirmed that the panda was Zhenzhen, an 11-year-old female raised in captivity and recently released into the wild as part of a special breeding project. After allowing her several hours to explore, researchers returned Zhenzhen to the Wolong Shenshuping Panda Base. "When she's in an amorous mood, we let her out of the enclosure, hoping she will mate with wild pandas," Wu Daifu, director of the Hetaoping panda training base, said in a telephone interview with China Central Television. Zhenzhen was set free in the Tiantaishan Area of the Wolong National Nature Reserve on March 5. Freed pandas sometimes wander into settlements near the reserve, Wu said. Back at the panda base, Zhenzhen will be looked after by staff members optimistic that she may already be pregnant. "We are not exactly sure whether Zhenzhen had mated with wild pandas, so we just assume she already did and we will take great care of her, hoping she will surprise us," Wu said. China's captive breeding program is credited with bringing giant pandas back from the brink of extinction. The rare animals are China's unofficial national mascot and live mainly in Sichuan's bamboo-covered mountains. More than 1,800 are estimated to exist in the wild, where they are threatened chiefly with habitat loss, and around 420 others live in captivity in zoos and reserves, the majority within China.

China orders crackdown on large outdoor religious statues

BEIJING (AP) — China's ruling Communist Party has ordered local governments to better regulate the construction of large outdoor religious statues amid increasing restrictions on religious expression of all kinds. The directive from the United Front Work Department viewed on its websites recently appeared targeted mainly at followers of Buddhism and Taoism, two of China's five officially recognized religions. It said regulating such statues and preventing further commercialization of religions must be a "top priority." Thousands of Buddhist and Taoist temples and shrines, along with mosques and churches, were damaged or destroyed under communism, especially during the violent 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution. Although many have been restored and reopened since then, new regulations and a bureaucratic overhaul earlier this year have put the day-to-day running of religious affairs directly under the officially atheistic party.

Duterte to drug suspects: Want to live longer? Stay in jail.

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The Philippine president has told drug suspects in a central province to look for a way to get arrested and then stay in jail if they want to live longer, in his latest threat under his bloody anti-drug crackdown. President Rodrigo Duterte did not identify the targets of his warning in a televised speech, but referred to people who grew rich through illegal drugs in Cebu province. Duterte warned: "You want to live longer? Stay in jail. ... Do not go out of that facility. It would not be healthy for you." Police, however, fatally shot a town mayor linked to illegal drugs inside a jail in 2016 in what they said was a shootout, but government investigators declared it a rubout.

Official says two foreign climbers died on Mount Everest

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Two foreign climbers attempting to scale Mount Everest have died on the world's highest peak, a Nepal mountaineering official said. Members of the expedition teams reported a Japanese climber died and a Macedonian also died, said Gyanendra Shrestha, who was stationed at Everest's base camp during the climbing season and received reports of the deaths. The Japanese climber was identified as 35-year-old Nobukazu Kuriki and the Macedonian was 63-year-old Gjeorgi Petkov. Kuriki was a known mountaineer who climbed many mountains and made several attempts on Everest. He was not successful in climbing Everest and lost most of his fingers due to frostbite during an attempt in 2012. Shrestha said Kuriki's body was around the Camp 2 area while the Macedonian climber's body was at a higher elevation. Further details were not available. Some 340 foreign climbers and their Sherpa guides attempted to scale Everest this season. Many succeeded during a stretch of good weather. The teams end summit attempts by the end of May, when weather conditions deteriorate.

Korean Air heiress questioned over Filipino housekeepers

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A Korean Air heiress whose tantrum over nuts delayed a flight four years ago is being investigated by South Korean immigration officials over suspicion of unlawfully hiring housekeepers from the Philippines. Cho Hyun-ah bowed and apologized for "causing troubles" before entering a Korea Immigration Service office in Seoul for questioning. Cho and her sister resigned from their executive positions at Korean Air in April following public criticism over their behavior and allegations their family mistreated and abused employees. Cho in 2014 got angry after she was served macadamia nuts in a bag instead of on a dish and her tantrum forced the Korean Air plane to return to a boarding gate at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport.

SPENDING SPREE. *Sony Corp. president Kenichiro Yoshida speaks as characters from Peanuts are shown on a screen at a press conference at the company's headquarters in Tokyo. The electronics and entertainment company is investing 1 trillion yen ($9 billion) mostly in image sensors over the next three years. Sony last month said it is buying a stake in Peanuts Holdings, the company behind Snoopy and Charlie Brown. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)*

Sony buys most of EMI Music, will spend $9B on image sensors

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Electronics and entertainment company Sony Corp. says it plans to spend $2.3 billion acquiring an additional 60 percent stake in EMI Music Publishing, home to the Motown catalog and contemporary artists like Kanye West, Alicia Keys, and Pharrell Williams.

Sony already owns 30 percent of EMI, so once the purchase from Mubadala Investment Co. is finalized, it will own 90 percent of the company, CEO Kenichiro Yoshida said in a news conference at Sony's headquarters.

Mubadala is a government-backed investment fund controlled by the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the oil-rich capital of the United Arab Emirates, a seven-state federation that also includes the Mideast commercial hub of Dubai. Its holdings include semiconductor maker Globalfoundries, and stakes in General Electric Co., Washington-based private equity firm The Carlyle Group, and numerous utility and energy companies.

Outlining the company's revamped strategy to strengthen both its hardware and its creative content, Yoshida said Sony plans to invest 1 trillion yen ($9 billion) mostly in image sensors over the next three years.

Image sensors are used in many products including medical imaging equipment, cameras, radar, sonar, and autonomous driving safety systems. They transmit data that make up an image by converting light waves into electrical signals.

Yoshida said the company's lead in sensors is crucial for evolving technologies such as self-driving cars and artificial intelligence.

The Tokyo-based maker of the Walkman portable player, the Aibo entertainment robot, and Bravia TVs has amassed know-how over the decades when it was leading in "analog technology," said Yoshida, who was named president and chief executive in February. He said Sony's CMOS image sensor excels in its speed, lighting range, and absence of noise.

Yoshida said the company's main theme was "getting closer to people," by connecting consumer services and content throughout its sprawling operations, which include the PlayStation game platform, music, films and home entertainment, still and video cameras, cellphones, computer chips, and financial services.

Yoshida said the initiative to beef up Sony's content was also behind a deal announced in May to acquire a stake in Peanuts Holdings, the company behind Snoopy and Charlie Brown.

But Yoshida stopped short of giving numbers for profit goals, saying he was presenting a long-term vision rooted in Sony's founding and ongoing philosophy of emotionally inspiring people.

One area where he is counting on growth is the company's TV content business in India, where the population growth is rapid and televisions are still catching on, he said.

Sony, founded in 1946, has had its share of problems, sinking into the red in recent years. It struggled to adjust to the digital age and was hammered by competition from Apple Inc., Samsung Electronics Co., and other nimbler rivals.

Sony has sold off chunks of its business, including its Vaio personal-computer unit, to turn itself around. Its cellphone operations are still losing money, but the executives promised that will change soon.

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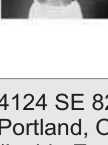

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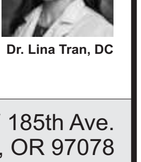

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Cambodian Riel	4070.4
China Renminbi	6.4204
Fijian Dollar	2.0717
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8456
Indian Rupee	67.062
Indonesian Rupiah	13940
Iranian Rial	42172
Japanese Yen	109.54
Laos New Kip	8365.9
Malaysian Ringgit	3.979
Nepal Rupee	107.59
Pakistani Rupee	115.78
Papua N.G. Kina	3.2695
Philippine Peso	52.579
Russian Ruble	62.218
Saudi Riyal	3.7502
Singapore Dollar	1.3396
South Korean Won	1075.0
Sri Lankan Rupee	158.65
Taiwan Dollar	29.847
Thai Baht	32.049
Vietnam Dong	22744