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TODAY

NATIONAL

Traffic deaths fall
The number of people killed in traffic accidents hit a 49-year low of 6,871 in 2005, the first time below 7,000 since 1956. Page 2

WORLD

Churchill's wish
British wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill favored summarily executing German leader Adolf Hitler in an electric chair. Page 6

Watery wine

Heavy rain continues to cause flooding in towns and communities across Northern California's wine country. Page 7

BUSINESS

NAVER
Kosdaq star

Kosdaq star
South Korea's most booming company — online business leader NHN, the country's equivalent of Google — is leading a similar revolution in traditional company working practices. Page 9

PERSPECTIVES



Stolen treasure
Three of the planet's most powerful art dealers defend themselves against charges that they have robbed the world of some of its most ancient treasures. Page 10

WE USE RECYCLED PAPER

INDEX

- Business 9
- Business Trends 13
- Classified Ads 9
- Community 15
- Lifestyle 16
- News 4
- Asia-Pacific 4
- National 2, 3
- World 5-8
- Opinion 12
- Perspectives 10, 11
- Sports 18-20
- TV/Radio 14
- Weather 20

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Kiev accuses Russia as gas crisis worsens

Says Moscow 'trying to undermine economy'

Compiled from AP, Reuters

MOSCOW — Ukraine has accused Russia of trying to undermine its economy while Moscow charged that Kiev is stealing Russian natural gas, amid a standoff over gas prices that has ballooned into a wider energy crisis with supplies heading further west into Europe significantly curtailed.

After weeks of talks, Russia's state-run natural gas monopoly OAO Gazprom halted deliveries to Ukraine on Sunday.

On Monday, Gazprom blamed Ukraine for the drop in supplies to Europe, saying it had diverted about 100 million cu. meters of Russian gas — worth about \$25 million — intended for European customers.

Citing Gazprom Deputy Chairman Alexander Medvedev, the Interfax news agency said that Gazprom proposed that independent auditors record how much gas is entering Ukraine's pipeline network.

Gazprom supplies about a quarter of the gas consumed in Europe. Most of that goes through pipes that cross Ukraine, and the dispute has raised worries of widespread supply disruptions throughout

much of the continent.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, accused Moscow of following "a scenario aimed at economic pressure and blackmail and ultimately at undermining the stability of the Ukrainian economy and flogging Russian gas deliveries to consumers in EU countries."

It called for a resumption of gas price negotiations, this time including international experts.

Gazprom has demanded that Ukraine more than quadruple the price it pays for Russian gas, which accounts for about a third of the gas used in the country of 48 million. It argues that its new price of \$230 per 1,000 cu. meters is in line with world market prices; it paid \$50 last year.

Ukrainian officials say such a huge leap will cripple the country's economy, which relies strongly on energy-intensive heavy industries. Ukraine has not objected to abandoning the cheap price it had been paying, but wants the increase phased in gradually.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko on Sunday denounced Russia for imposing "obvious economic pressure on Ukraine." Relations between Russia and Ukraine have been stiff and chilly over the past year, since Yushchenko came to power and

vowed to move the country out of Russia's sphere of influence.

After meeting with ambassadors from EU countries, Yushchenko denied that Ukraine is skimming Russian natural gas for its own use — but suggested that Kiev is dipping into it for transport services.

"For a few days, there has not been a single cubic meter of gas from Russia," he told reporters. "Before, Russia provided 60 million cu. meters a day for transit, part of which was used as technological gas to complete the transit." Thus, Ukraine is now making the transit entirely at its own expense.

Ukraine's Fuel and Energy Minister Ivan Plachkov said that the reduction in gas supplies reaching Central and Eastern Europe "is in accord with the cut in gas supplies to Ukraine from Russia for transit." The ITR-Tass news agency reported. He also said that for its own use, Ukraine is relying on its own reserves and on deliveries of about 120 million cu. meters a day from Turkmenistan which is shipped through Russian pipelines to Ukraine.

Medvedev said that Russia was not sending on any Turkmen gas.

"As of today, only Russian gas is entering the Ukrainian gas transport system," he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



A GIRL GETS A SCARE Monday as she is greeted by a dancer wearing a lion's mask as part of New Year's celebrations at a Tokyo shopping mall. AP/JUPHOTO

Tokyo slams China's denials in diplomat's suicide

Kyodo News

A diplomatic spat between Japan and China over the suicide of a Japanese Consulate General official in Shanghai further Sunday as Tokyo issued a statement calling "serious" crimes made a day earlier untrue and also noting there were "regrettable actions" taken by the Chinese side.

Regarding a statement issued Saturday by the Chinese Embassy in Japan that asserted Japan said the suicide was due to job stress, the Foreign Ministry said, "The Japanese side has not expressed such a position."

The dispute, which came amid already icy relations between the two countries, arose after the ministry on Dec. 28 acknowledged the suicide and said "regrettable actions" by local Chinese security authorities were believed to be behind it.

The Sunday statement also said Japan "cannot accept the Chinese position that claims 'this incident has nothing to do with Chinese government personnel'" and that Japan had not received any explanation from the Chinese government regarding the facts of the incident.

The suicide came to light on Dec. 27 when a Japanese newspaper reported that the official, reportedly the head of the consulate's encrypted communications, killed himself after leaving a note indicating he was under pressure to provide China with classified information. It was reported that he was being blackmailed over his relationship with a bar hostess.

Emperor offers New Year's greetings to public

Compiled from Kyodo, AP

Emperor Akihito offered his annual New Year's greetings to well-wishers who gathered Monday at the Imperial Palace to see the royal family.

Some 50,200 people — the smallest number since the Emperor's reign began in 1989 — visited the palace amid rainy weather, the Imperial Household Agency said.

"I am truly pleased to celebrate the new year with you," the 72-year-old Emperor said in a speech from the glass-covered balcony of the Chowa-Den wing of the palace. "I wish for the happiness of the people in our country and peace in the world."

He was accompanied by Empress Michiko and other



THE IMPERIAL FAMILY waves to well-wishers Monday morning from a balcony at the Imperial Palace during the annual New Year's greetings. KYODO/PHOTO

Imperial family members, who waved to the crowd. Seven rounds of greetings were held. Crown Princess Masako, who is recovering from a stress-induced illness, took part in three of them, two more than last year. It was seen as another indication that her condition is improving. On Sunday, she attended the New Year's ceremony at the palace for the first time in three years.

The Emperor's New Year's message released Sunday was dedicated to all the victims of World War II.

"Three million and one hundred thousand Japanese people died in the war, and many foreigners were also victims," he said in a statement.

"We will never forget the people who lost their lives in the war, and bear in mind that the Japan of today is built on the sacrifice made by those many people," he said, apparently referring to all who died, regardless of nationality.

U.N. officials seek to grill Assad over Hariri assassination

BEIRUT (AP) The U.N. commission investigating the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri has asked to interview Syrian President Bashar Assad and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, the commission's spokesperson said Monday.

The commission will also seek to interview (former Syrian Vice President) Abdul-Halim Khaddam as soon as possible," spokeswoman Nasra Hassan said, referring to the man who alleged in TV interview broadcast Friday that Assad had threatened Hariri several months before he was assassinated in a Feb. 14 truck bombing.



Bashar Assad

The commission, whose mandate was recently renewed by the U.N. Security Council for another six months, has reported that several people whom Hariri spoke to after he met Assad in August 2004 said the Syrian leader had threatened the Lebanese prime minister over the issue of Syrian plans to extend the term of Lebanon's president.

Syrian officials, such as al-Sharaa, have denied any threat was made.

Khaddam was the first former senior member of the Syrian government to confirm the threat. Hassan said Monday that Khaddam's remarks in the TV interview "corroborated the information we had from other sources and which were contained in the commission's two reports."

"The U.N. commission had already sent a request to interview Syrian President Bashar Assad and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa among others," Hassan said. "The commission is waiting

for a response from the Syrians," Hassan added. She refused to say when the request to interview Assad was made.

There was no immediate comment on the U.N. commission's request.

In two interim reports published late last year, the commission accused top Syrian and Lebanese intelligence officials of being involved in the killing of Hariri. In an interview with the media, outgoing commission Chairman Dorel Melhis said he is confident that the Syrian "authorities" were behind the assassination.

Syria has repeatedly denied the charge.

The assassination of Hariri, in a blast that killed 20 other people in central Beirut, was a turning point in modern Lebanese history. As he was seen as a quiet opponent of Syrian influence in Lebanon, his killing provoked mass demonstrations against Syria. Combined with international pressure, these protests forced Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon in April, ending a 29-year military presence in the country.

Japan's quake-preparedness quest never-ending

Second in a series
By KAJHO SHIMIZU
Staff writer

Amid the scores of shoddily built high-rises connected to disgraced architect Hidetsugu

FRAMING THE FUTURE

gu Aneha, the fraud scandal may have had one positive outcome — reawakening society's sense of urgency to prepare for a major earthquake.

"The Aneha fraud raised people's awareness of quake-resistant technologies," said Nagahide Kani, industry director of the Japan Society of Seismic Isolation, an industry group engaged in developing quake-resistant technology.

The Aneha scandal that has rocked the nation involves the construction of dozens of structures built using faked

quake-proofing data.

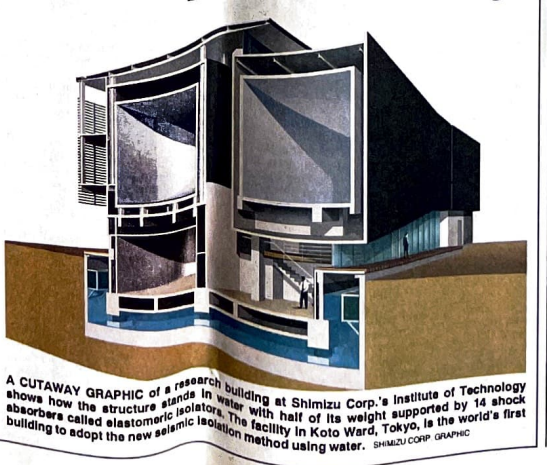
In the past year through October alone, Japan experienced more than 1,120 earthquakes with a magnitude greater than 4.

Predicting when and where a Big One will hit is still an imperfect science, but the government as well as companies have long been working on cutting-edge technology to mitigate such disasters.

This spring, one of their latest developments will debut.

The Meteorological Agency will introduce the "kinkyu jishin sokushu," one of the world's first public earthquake early warning systems, designed to detect the initial quivers before a major quake strikes.

"This system is aimed at warning people before a strong tremor hits. Even if it is only a few seconds before,



A CUTAWAY GRAPHIC of a research building at Shimizu Corp.'s Institute of Technology shows how the structure stands in water with half of its weight supported by 14 shock absorbers called elastomeric isolators. The facility in Koto Ward, Tokyo, is the world's first building to adopt the new seismic isolation method using water. SHIMIZU CORP. GRAPHIC

NATIONAL

FIRST TIME BELOW 7,000 SINCE '56 Road deaths drop to 49-year low

By Masami Ito

The death toll from traffic accidents dropped to 6,871 last year, down by 487 from the previous year and less than 7,000 for the first time since 1956, the National Police Agency said Monday.

The death toll for 2005 was only 40 percent of the figure for 1970, when traffic fatalities hit a postwar record of 16,765.

The annual toll dipped below 8,000 in 2003 and was about 7,000 in 2004. It has fallen for five years in a row.

The agency attributed the improvement to many factors, including stiffer penalties for traffic violations, a rise in seat-belt use and im-

provements in life-saving technology. Traffic death figures only count people who die within 24 hours of an accident.

A revision to the Road Traffic Law that took effect in November 2004 apparently had a dramatic effect in cutting accidents involving drivers using cell phones, which became a new offense under the law.

Further steps, especially those addressing elderly drivers, will be needed to achieve the government's goal of reducing the annual death toll to fewer than 5,000 by 2013, agency officials said.

The number of traffic accidents dropped 1.9 percent to

933,546, and the number of people injured in them fell 2.2 percent to 1.16 million.

The declines in accidents and injuries signify a major turnaround after all-time highs in both were set for the second straight year in 2004.

NPA Commissioner General Iwao Uruma urged the public to lower its guard, issuing a reminder that despite the improvements, accidents still topped 900,000 for the third straight year and that the number of injured eclipsed 1 million for the seventh consecutive year.

Other statistics released by the agency show that an average of 18.82 people were killed in road accidents each day

last year, or one every 78 minutes.

By age group, the fall in fatalities was most conspicuous for people aged between 16 and 24, while people 65 or over accounted for 40 percent of total fatalities.

Of the 47 prefectures, Aichi topped the list at 351 traffic fatalities, followed by Saitama with 322 and Chiba with 305.

Hokkaido, which topped the list for 13 years in a row through 2004, saw fatalities drop to 302 in 2005, down 85 from 2004. Tokyo had 289.

Tottori had the least number of deaths at 45, followed by Kochi at 47 and Nagasaki at 57.

Program aims to reform domestic abusers Rehabilitation classes seek to halt surge in violence in Japanese homes

By MASAMI ITO

For years, Masaru Suzuki used threats and physical violence to control his wife. Whenever he did not get his way, he lashed out at her verbally or with hands that were all too ready to strike.

Suzuki is one of the thousands of domestic-violence perpetrators in Japan.

Be it inside the home or in public, Suzuki said he did not act according to his wishes. If she became hysterical, he grabbed her by her arms and shook her.

One time, when his wife was about six months pregnant with their first child, Suzuki beat her and later had to rush her to a hospital.

"I was the patriarch, using whatever method necessary to get my own way," Suzuki said. "Not once did I think I was doing anything wrong."

Finally, in August 2004, his wife took their two daughters and left him.

"That was when I knew I had to do something about (my problem)," Suzuki said. Domestic violence is on the rise in Japan and Suzuki's case is only the tip of the iceberg.

According to data from the National Police Agency, there were 14,410 acknowledged cases of domestic violence in 2004, a 14.7 percent increase from 2003.

As a result of domestic violence, the 2004 NPA data show there were 1,094 arrests for murder, 75 for rape and 711 for injury.

Offenders can be punished by law, but experts on the issue say the government needs to create a legal framework to help rehabilitate the offenders.

If the experts are right about rehabilitation, Suzuki is one of the lucky ones.

In October 2004, he joined Aware, one of Japan's few rehabilitation facilities for abusive partners.

At weekly meetings, men gather from prefectures as far apart as Iwate, Nagano and Shizuoka. Together with facilitator and Aware founder Noriko Yamaguchi, they discuss their problem.

During the meetings, participants share opinions on topics such as what constitutes violence, the want and need for power and control over partners, stress man-



NORIKO YAMAGUCHI, founder of Aware, poses in front of a certificate designating her as a facilitator for a domestic violence offenders' rehabilitation program. **YOSHIKI MURA** PHOTO

agement and other issues.

"The program (at Aware) is not medical treatment, it is education," Yamaguchi said. "Some specialists see domestic violence as an addiction to violence, but that is not true because (the offenders) choose violence to gain control."

Since its establishment in April 2002, Yamaguchi estimates that more than 100 abusers have sought help from Aware. At present, about 25 men are taking part in the program, including Suzuki. However, many don't finish the program.

Yamaguchi said there is nothing she can do about that because there is no law forcing abusers to participate in such programs.

The law against domestic violence was only enacted in 2001, and its first revision took effect in December 2004.

The revised law expanded the definition of domestic violence to include not just physical but also psychological abuse. It also calls on local governments to create guidelines to further prevent domestic abuse and to provide support for victims.

But experts point out Japan's legal system does not have any specific guidelines for forcing perpetrators of domestic violence to participate in a rehabilitation program.

"Only legal power, or public authorities, can give awareness to (offenders) who do not

even realize they are being abusive," Yamaguchi said. Japan can look for some examples to follow abroad.

In California, the penal code states that an arrested offender who has been released on probation will be monitored by a probation officer and must participate in a rehabilitation program for at least a year.

If the offender complies with all the rules and does not break any other laws, the abuser's criminal record will be cleared.

"We have the same (law) for drugs, too," said Alyce LaViolette, cochair of the California Association of Batterers' Intervention Programs. "It is to give people a chance to get better, give people a chance to improve without ruining their record."

LaViolette was in Japan in October to talk to government officials about her program for offenders and to explain the law against them in California.

She stressed the need for a law in Japan to force perpetrators to participate in programs "because you need to create a law that doesn't do damage to the people you are trying to help... we need to look at the effect on the abuser and the abuser," she said.

As one of the pioneers in establishing a program to rehabilitate domestic-violence offenders, LaViolette has also been active in training facilitators like Aware's Yamaguchi.

Throughout her 26-year career in the field, LaViolette has dealt with many perpetrators.

In the beginning, she said, not everyone working with survivors at shelters was supportive. Some of those who were helping victims were upset that she began working with the abusive mates and asked her why she was devoting her energy to them.

"Women at a battered women's shelter generally have suffered some of the worst abuse," LaViolette explained, adding that their injuries and suffering were often beyond belief.

LaViolette worked with perpetrators "because one of them can batter many different women," she said. "And I wanted to see (the offenders) change."

It is true not everybody can be rehabilitated, LaViolette pointed out, but there are offenders like Suzuki who really do want to change.

Suzuki has been participating in the program at Aware for more than a year but said he will continue until he feels he is someone who will do good for his family, not harm.

"I am a perpetrator, a criminal offender," Suzuki said. "I just have not been arrested yet. But there are people out there who need to be arrested to truly understand that what they are doing is a criminal act of violence, before it's too late."

EQUINE SHRINE CLIMB



HAKODATE, Hokkaido — Horses from the Dosanko Farm horse-riding farm gallop up the 124 ms of Hachiman Shrine on Monday, where the riders offered New Year's prayers. "Dosanko" is the name given to horses native to Hokkaido. **KYODO** PHOTO

North Korea rips Abe for linking abduction issue

BEIJING (Kyodo) North Korea on Monday slammed Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe for saying resolution of the North's past abductions of Japanese nationals is necessary before diplomatic relations can be normalized.

"What is most essential for settling the issues related to the DPRK-Japan relations is not the abduction issue but the issue of Japan's liquidation of its past crimes," the official Minju Joseon newspaper said in a commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name.

"The present hostile relations between the DPRK and Japan originated from Japan's crimes—war, past and present. Relations have not yet improved simply because Japan has not redressed its crimes," the commentary said.

On Dec. 26, a day after the two sides agreed to resume normalization talks, Abe reiterated at a news conference in Tokyo that Japan has a "basic and well-established principle that there will be no normalization of diplomatic relations without a resolution of the abduction issue."

The Minju Joseon commentary accused Abe of "distoring the basic issue."

Poisonous gas hit inn workers during search for victims

AKITA (Kyodo) Two employees of a hot spring inn in Yuzawa, Akita Prefecture, where a family of four died last week after inhaling hydrogen sulfide gas were hospitalized, it was learned Monday.

According to local authorities, the two employees of Okuyama Ryokan in the Do-royu hot spring area had joined 47-year-old Yasushi Matsui in his search for his wife and two children after they did not return to the

lodge Thursday.

The three family members were found collapsed in a hollow near the inn's parking lot and were later pronounced dead. Matsui lost consciousness after pulling one of his children out of the cavity, and died in a hospital the following day.

A high concentration of the toxic gas was found in the hollow. Police said they suspect the two inn employees, a 27-year-old man and a 20-year-old woman who were searching

near the hollow, also inhaled the gas. Both were hospitalized for the deaths, but the man has already been released and the woman is not in a life-threatening situation.

Meanwhile, local officials said Monday that of the 16 people in four households in the vicinity who had been advised to evacuate following the tragedy, six people — all employees of Okuyama Ryokan — moved to lodgings in the city of Yuzawa.

Kawasaki foreign residents' panel has significant impact on city policy

By ERIKO ARITA

In the nearly 10 years since its establishment, the Kawasaki City Representatives Assembly for Foreign Residents, an advisory body to the mayor made up of non-Japanese residents, has been largely successful.

As the country's only foreign residents' panel established by ordinance, residents and those involved in the assembly alike say it has helped reflect foreigners' needs in local administration, for example by taking on the issue of housing discrimination.

But the problems facing foreign residents continue to multiply and the assembly's work is far from over, they added.

Kawasaki set up the panel in December 1996 amid a growing movement across the country to demand suffrage at the local government level for foreigners, modeled after similar municipal assemblies in Germany, said Nobuki Yamazaki of the city's Human Rights and Gender Equality Office.

The assembly consists of 26 members who serve two-year terms. They are selected from foreign residents who volunteer to serve. The current body has people from 15 countries and is chaired by Mohammad Anwer, a Pakistani who runs a computer-related business and has lived in Kawasaki for 15 years.

"An increasing number of foreigners in the city do not

return to their homelands and continue living here," Anwer said. "So I want them to participate in local communities, and the assembly should keep working on their problems."

More than 100 foreigners have so far served as assembly members, and the panel has submitted a total of 24 proposals to the mayor.

In 2000, the city enacted an ordinance stipulating that no individual should be denied the opportunity to rent housing based on nationality, age or disability. The ordinance was drafted in response to an assembly proposal calling on the city to ban housing discrimination against foreigners.

While there are no statistics to indicate how effective the ordinance has been, many foreign residents say discrimination by landlords and real estate firms has declined in recent years, according to Anwer.

The city also established a system whereby it becomes the renter's guarantor if residents pay 35 percent of one month's rent to a guarantor firm for a two-year contract. "The system is helpful for foreigners because it is hard for them to look for guarantors" as landlords require, Anwer said.

According to the city, 33 households headed by foreigners used the system in fiscal 2004.

But Anwer said many foreign residents are still un-

aware that the system exists, and the city should do more to get the word out.

The number of foreign residents in Kawasaki has more than doubled over the past two decades. The number of registered foreign residents was 26,508 in 2004, compared with 10,246 in 1982.

Assembly members made up the largest share of foreign residents in Kawasaki, accounting for 89 percent of the total in 1982. But their share had fallen to 35 percent by 2004. On the other hand, the number of Chinese is growing, making up 25 percent of foreign residents in 2004. Filipinos are the next largest group of foreign nationals at 12 percent, followed by Brazilians at 5 percent.

Many children of longtime foreign residents have reached school age and are now facing problems, which are among the issues currently being discussed at the assembly, Anwer said.

The city dispatches bilingual citizens who can teach basic Japanese to foreign children after school. The service is limited to one year per child.

"But there are some children who cannot acquire Japanese (language skills) within a year," Anwer said, adding the assembly members are seeking an extension of the training period.

Even children who have mastered daily Japanese conversation have difficulty understanding terms used in



MEMBERS OF THE Kawasaki City Representatives Assembly for Foreign Residents exchange views at a meeting on Nov. 27. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KAWASAKI MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

their lessons, he added.

Assembly members are also discussing the possibility of sending teachers to provide supplementary lessons for such children, he said.

Another issue being addressed is suffrage. Anwer said if foreign residents had the right to vote in local elections, it would help solve many of the problems they encounter.

"If a foreigner is admitted as a resident and has the right to vote, the consciousness of local assembly members, companies and communities will change and their discrimination against foreigners will decline," he said.

Takashi Miyajima, a professor at Rikkyo University in Tokyo and an adviser to the Kawasaki city government on policies related to foreign residents, said the city was prob-

ably the first local government to set up a panel composed solely of foreign residents.

At least 15 local governments around Japan now have panels composed of foreigners or that have a mix of Japanese and non-Japanese members, according to city officials.

But the status of Kawasaki's panel is more secure "because the assembly is stipulated by ordinance, which is essentially a law, so it is impossible to abolish it without a decision by the city assembly," Miyajima said.

In fact, a similar panel set up by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was abolished in 2001.

Some local governments have mixed panels of foreigners and Japanese, but members are often intellectuals

chosen by the municipality, and they are given topics to discuss by authorities.

In Kawasaki's assembly, members come from the general public and they decide the issues they want to discuss, Miyajima said.

"Since foreign residents in Japan do not have the right to vote, we need more assemblies where not the elite but common foreigners can voice their opinions," he said.

The Kawasaki Municipal Government is looking for city residents willing to sit on the sixth foreigners' assembly that starts in April. Selected members will be asked to serve a two-year term, attending about eight meetings a year and participating in other activities, including field trips.

Candidates must have been born on or before April 2, 1988, and be able to read Japanese and hold citizenship in Japan. The deadline to apply is Jan. 13.

For more information, call the Kawasaki municipal office at (044) 200-2350 or e-mail 25gaok@city.kawasaki.jp

NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Public mailbox torched in Hyogo

KOBE (Kyodo) A public mailbox caught fire Monday morning in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture, damaging more than 400 New Year's cards, postal officials said.

A 29-year-old resident near the mailbox called the fire department at around 1:10 a.m. after seeing smoke emanating from the letter slot, the officials said.

After the fire was put out, postal staff found that 439 New Year's cards and three other postcards had been damaged.

A fire set in a mailbox in Kobe's Nishi Ward on Friday damaged about 1,000 postcards.

Ratings bring good news to NHK

Kyoto News

The audience ratings for NHK's annual New Year's Eve music show, "Kohaku Utagassen" ("Red vs. White Song Contest"), improved last year, Video Research Ltd. said Monday, giving some encouragement to the scandal-hit public broadcaster.

The show, which lasts more than four hours, is divided into two parts. In the Kanto region centering on Tokyo, the ratings came to 35.4 percent for the first part and 42.9 percent for the second part, up from 30.8 percent and a record-low 39.3 percent, respectively, in 2004.

The ratings improved for both segments of the show for the first time in seven years.

The singing contest, first aired in 1951, was once immensely popular, with ratings around 70 percent to 80 percent until the mid-1980s.

But ratings have since declined, with critics attributing the fall to diversification of individual views in Japan and more attractive programs produced by commercial broadcasters.

To help improve ratings, NHK used Monta Mino, a popular host of several commercial TV shows, as the main host Saturday and introduced viewer voting to choose songs for the year-end show.

Ships collide in Inland Sea; all safe

KOBE (Kyodo) A tanker and a freighter collided in the Inland Sea shortly after Monday, the coast guard said.

No injuries or oil spills occurred in the 12:30 a.m. collision between the 699-ton tanker Kannon Maru No. 8 and the 698-ton cargo ship Taisei Maru.

The coast guard questioned the captains and other crew members of both ships about the collision, which occurred about 5 km west of Awaji Island in Hyogo Prefecture.

The Japan Times



The Japan Times Printer-Friendly Edition

Program aims to reform domestic abusers

Rehabilitation classes seek to halt surge in violence in Japanese homes

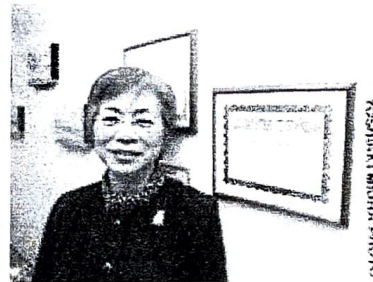
By MASAMI ITO
Staff writer

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Finally, in August 2004, his wife took their two daughters and left him.

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Domestic violence is on the rise in Japan and Suzuki's case is only the tip of the iceberg.

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Since its establishment in April 2002, Yamaguchi estimates that more than 100 abusers have sought help from Aware. At present, about 25 men are taking part in the program, including Suzuki. However, many don't finish the program.

Yamaguchi said there is nothing she can do about that because there is no law forcing abusers to participate in such programs.

The law against domestic violence was only enacted in 2001, and its first revision took effect in December 2004.

The revised law expanded the definition of domestic violence to include not just physical but also psychological abuse. It also calls on local governments to create guidelines to further prevent domestic abuse and to provide support for victims.

But experts point out Japan's legal system does not have any specific guidelines for forcing perpetrators of domestic violence to participate in a rehabilitation program.

"Only legal power, or public authorities, can give awareness to (offenders) who do not even realize they are being abusive," Yamaguchi said.

Japan can look for some examples to follow abroad.

In California, the penal code states that an arrested offender who has been released on probation will be monitored by a probation officer and must participate in a rehabilitation program for at least a year.

If the offender complies with all of the rules and does not break any other laws, the abuser's criminal record will be cleared.

"We have the same (law) for drugs, too," said Alyce LaViolette, cochair of the California Association of Batterers' Intervention Programs. "It is to give people a chance to get better, give people a chance to improve without ruining their record."

LaViolette was in Japan in October to talk to government officials about her program for offenders and to explain the law against them in California.

She stressed the need for a law in Japan to force perpetrators to participate in programs "because you need to create a law that doesn't do damage to the people you are trying to help . . . we need to look at the effect on the abused and the abuser," she said.

As one of the pioneers in establishing a program to rehabilitate domestic-violence offenders, LaViolette has also been active in training facilitators like Aware's Yamaguchi.

Throughout her 26-year career in the field, LaViolette has dealt with many perpetrators.

In the beginning, she said, not everyone working with survivors at shelters was supportive. Some of those who were helping victims were upset that she began working with the abusive males and asked her why she was devoting her energy to them.

"Women at a battered women's shelter generally have suffered some of the worst abuse," LaViolette explained, adding that their injuries and suffering were often beyond belief.

LaViolette worked with perpetrators "because one of them can batter many different women," she said. "And I wanted to see (the offenders) change."

It is true not everybody can be rehabilitated, LaViolette pointed out, but there are offenders like Suzuki who really do want to change.

Suzuki has been participating in the program at Aware for more than a year but said he will continue until he feels he is someone who will do good for his family, not harm.

"I am a perpetrator, a criminal offender," Suzuki said. "I just have not been arrested yet. But there are people out there who need to be arrested to truly understand that what they are doing is a criminal act of violence, before it's too late."

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