

Interesting Times

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Catholic Church sells 1914-built church edifice in Philadelphia, USA to Iglesia Ni Cristo

Mater Dolorosa church closed and sold due to dwindling mass attendance, and mounting operational deficits



A streetview of the Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church edifice in Frankford, Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States, which was recently bought by the Iglesia Ni Cristo from the Catholic Church for \$450,000. (Photo captured from Google maps street view/Courtesy Google maps)

(Eagle News) — An old Catholic church edifice built in 1914 in Philadelphia was recently sold by the Catholic Church to the Iglesia Ni Cristo, four years since it was closed due to dwindling mass attendance.

The Iglesia Ni Cristo, a global Christian Church first registered in the Philippines on July 27, 1914, bought the Mater Dolorosa Catholic church property for \$450,000.

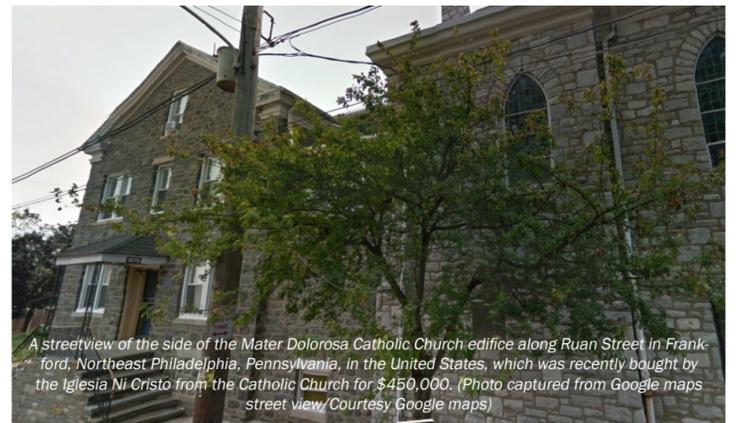
It would be converted to an Iglesia Ni Cristo house of worship that will serve its growing membership in Philadelphia, Pennsylv-

vania in the United States.

A report by the Northeast Times, a community newspaper in Northeast Philadelphia, said the proceeds of the sale were to be used by the Catholic Church to primarily pay parish operational expenses and close the annual operating deficit.

Rev. Thomas Higgins, pastor at Holy Innocents Catholic Church, announced the sale recently of the property with the exact address at 1676 Ruan Street in Frankford, Philadelphia.

(Eagle News Service)



A streetview of the side of the Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church edifice along Ruan Street in Frankford, Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States, which was recently bought by the Iglesia Ni Cristo from the Catholic Church for \$450,000. (Photo captured from Google maps street view/Courtesy Google maps)

DOH asks UP-PGH to probe whether three deaths are linked to Dengvaxia

The Department of Health has tapped the Philippine General Hospital to determine whether three deaths were linked to Dengvaxia.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque told reporters the University of the Philippines-run will assemble a panel of medical experts and pathologists to look into the deaths of the three vaccinated children.

“UP-PGH will be providing an independent review and assessment on the probable cause of deaths of cases submitted by the Department of Health,” Duque said, without giving details on the three cases.

More than 830,000 Filipino schoolchildren were injected with the vaccine last year—under then-Pres-



A new dengue vaccine “Dengvaxia” developed by the Sanofi Pasteur Dengue Company is shown to AFP reporters at a hotel in Mexico City on September 9, 2016. The dengue vaccine is the culmination of 20 years of Sanofi Pasteur’s commitment to discover and develop a vaccine against dengue for priority launch in Latin American and Asian countries where dengue is a major public health priority. YURI CORTEZ / AFP

ident Benigno Aquino III’s term—in the world’s first public dengue immunization program.

The government suspended the sale and distribution of the dengue vaccine

this month after the French company Sanofi, the manufacturer, warned it could worsen symptoms for people who had not previously been infected. (Agence France Presse)

President Duterte gives P100 million to VMCC; directs procurement of the best medical equipment for veterans

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday, November 20, turned over P100 million to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMCC) for the improvement of its services, and instructed officials of the medical center to get the best medical equipment in the market for the hospital that provides service to the country’s veteran soldiers and their dependents.

“Buy the best, huwag yung lowest bid... I want quality. Quality ako,” the President told the hospital’s officials and staff.

He also banned the practice of awarding contracts to the lowest bidder, saying this was only a

source of corruption.

The President also vowed to augment his P100 million donation before the end of the year.

He said the additional funds would come from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR).

Meanwhile, 19 patients

undergoing hemodialysis received groceries from the Chief Executive.

The President was accompanied by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, and Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go.

(with PND report)



President Rodrigo Duterte (Photo courtesy: Presidential photos)

Defying Trump threat, UN rejects US decision on Jerusalem

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29 dead in fitness center blaze in S. Korea: fire service

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Nine foreigners among Melbourne car attack injured

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President Duterte declares unilateral ceasefire with communist rebels for the holidays



President Rodrigo Duterte (Photo courtesy: Presidential Photo)

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte has declared a ceasefire with the communists for the holidays.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said President Rodrigo Duterte said on Tuesday night that the ceasefire was effective from December 24, 2017 to January 2, 2018.

“This unilateral ceasefire would lessen the apprehension of the public... We expect that the (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines) would do a similar gesture of goodwill,” Roque said.

President Duterte has declared the CPP-NPA as terrorist organizations. He said this was following their “depredatory acts” that include the killing of a 4-month-old baby. (Eagle News Service)

Palace welcomes NPA declaration of 8-day ceasefire

The Palace on Friday, December 22, also welcomed the New People’s Army declaration of an eight-day ceasefire covering the holidays. Presidential Spokes-

person Harry Roque said the government “expect(s)” the Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA to “honor their word and comply” with the unilateral ceasefire.

He said President Rodrigo Duterte, for his part, “decided to declare a suspension of offensive military operations against the Reds precisely because he wants Filipinos to feel safer during the holiday season.”

Even then, he said that the government will “remain vigilant in ensuring the safety of our countrymen.”

“May we all stand together in fulfilling our shared desire of achieving lasting peace throughout the nation,” he said.

The NPA declared the 8-day unilateral ceasefire on Friday, days after the government declared its own.

The government’s ceasefire falls on the same days, but is six hours longer on December 26 and January 2, 2018.

The NPA said the declaration of its ceasefire was in “observance of the Filipino people’s traditional holidays and the Party’s 49th anniversary.” (ENS)

National security will not be compromised by Chinese telco – Malacañang

QUEZON CITY, Philippines – Malacañang allayed fears that a third telecommunications company player from China will compromise the national security of the country.

According to Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, the administration is taking steps to strengthen the country’s cyber-security and to further strengthen the ties between the two countries.

“Well, as far as security considerations are concerned, we will look into that because there are really concerns overall on cybersecurity in general,” he said.

This was in reaction to a statement from detained Senator Leila De Lima claiming that the country’s “information and communications infrastructure” might be compromised if China becomes the third telecommunications player.



Screenshot from Agila Balita

“What will assure us that in the future, our national security and whole intelligence and defense systems won’t be compromised, if not under the complete control of a foreign government with national interests diametrically opposed

to our own?” De Lima’s statement read.

The administration targets March 2018 as the start of operations of the Chinese telecommunications company. (Eagle News Service)

Lorenzana says he sacked Navy chief Mercado because he “lost confidence” in him

(Eagle News) — “I have lost trust and confidence in his integrity and leadership.”

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Wednesday said this was the reason Navy Flag Officer in Command Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercado was sacked the day before.

In a press conference, Lorenzana said in particular, he “question(ed) (Mercado’s) intention behind his fixation with one specific company for the combat management system of the frigate acquisition project.”

Lorenzana was referring to the project worth P15.5 billion, which was awarded to Hyundai Heavy Industries.

Hyundai had wanted to tap another supplier for the installation of the combat management system, a move that was supported by the Department of National Defense’s bids and awards committee,



Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana

but that Mercado disapproved of.

Lorenzana said because of that “fixation” with one company, Mercado “disregarded” several directives the defense secretary issued, an act which the defense secretary said was tantamount to “insubordi-

nation.”

“...He talks about rescinding the contract kung hindi matutuloy yung pinapasok niya kumpanya,” Lorenzana added, accusing Mercado also of “forum shopping.” (Eagle News Service)

Duterte orders DAP president to vacate post

Order comes a week after DAP employees publicly accused Elba Cruz of going on frequent travels abroad, among others

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the Development Academy of the Philippines president to vacate her post.

Duterte’s order for Elba Cruz to leave the post was contained in a letter written by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea dated December 18.

It came a week after DAP employees publicly accused Cruz of going on travels abroad frequently, and of violations of Civil Service Commission rules, among others, and submitted a petition to replace Cruz to Duterte.

But in his letter, Medialdea said Cruz was to vacate her post “considering that (her) term of office expired



President Rodrigo Duterte (Photo courtesy: Presidential Photo)

on 30 June 2017 and that (she) has been serving the DAP Board in a holdover capacity.”

“...We now wish to inform you that, upon instructions of the President, your service in such holdover status is hereby discontinued effective immediately,” Medialdea said.

“To ensure uninterrupted delivery, you are hereby directed to turn over all official documents, papers and properties in your possession to the proper office of the DAP,” Medialdea added.

In a statement, the DAP Personnel Association hailed Duterte’s move, calling it the “best gift” they could have for the holidays. (ENS)

Roque: Palace looking at ways to keep ERC running following Ombudsman suspension of all ERC commissioners



Mr. Alfredo J. Non



Atty. Gloria Victoria C. Yap-Taruc



Atty. Josefina Patricia M. Asirit



Mr. Geronimo D. Sta. Ana

Commissioners of the Energy Regulatory Commission suspended for a year without pay by the Ombudsman. /ERC website/

(Eagle News) — The Palace is studying how to keep the Energy Regulatory Commission running following the suspension by the Ombudsman of its commissioners.

“Pinag-aaralan na rin po

iyong aspeto ng administratibo kung ano ang pupuwedeng gawin ng Palasyo mismo para hindi po matigil ang operasyon ng ERC,” Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a radio interview on Friday.

He said that “paralysis” was in the offing in the commission following the suspension for a year of Gloria Victoria Yap-Taruc, Josefina Patricia Magpale-Asirit, Alfredo Non, and Geronimo Sta. Ana.

The Ombudsman also ordered the filing of graft charges against them after they allegedly extended the deadline for the application of power supply agreements in 2016, thereby allowing Manila

Electric Co. to corner lucrative deals.

He said this was because the commission was a “collegial body,” which means that for it to create policies, it needs to vote as a body.

“Ibig sabihin po niyan ay hindi po puwedeng isang tao lang ang nagdedesisyon,” he said.

He clarified, however, that he respects the decision of the Ombudsman. (ENS)

Senior deputy executive secretary Guevarra appointed as acting executive secretary from December 27 to 31

(Eagle News) — Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea has designated an acting executive secretary from December 27 to December 31.

Medialdea appointed Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Menardo Guevarra to the position on those dates as he said he would be “on personal leave.”

“Whereas to ensure continuity of government service, it is necessary to designate an acting executive secretary to take care of the day-to-day operations in the Office of the President and assist the President in the general administration of the executive department,” Medialdea said in Special Order No. 1163.

He said “all departments, agencies and instrumentalities of the government shall assist the acting executive secretary in the discharge of his functions as stated herein.” (Eagle News Service)



Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Menardo Guevarra (2nd L) listens to an assistant during the universal periodic review of the Philippines by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The review took place on May 8, 2017 at the UN offices in Geneva. / AFP / Fabrice Coffrini/

Senate releases Aegis Juris frat leader Arvin Balag



(File photo) Arvin Balag, in black near the center, attending the October 18, 2017 hearing on hazing victim Horacio Castillo III's death. /Meanne Corvera/ Eagle News/

By: Meanne Corvera
Eagle News Service

The Senate released Aegis Juris fraternity leader Arvin Balag from the senate premises on Thursday night, December 21, more than two months after he was first detained there on October 18,

This was confirmed by Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Jose Balajadia.

He said Balag first underwent medical check-up as part of standard operating procedure before release. Three lawyers accompanied him.

Balajadia said that he had already informed Senate President Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III and Senator Panfilo “Ping” Lacson, chairman

of the senate committee on public order, about Balag’s release.

It was Lacson’s committee which decided to detain Balag within the senate premises after he had been cited in contempt for refusing to answer the senator’s questions regarding the death of hazing victim, University of Sto. Tomas law student, Horacio “Atio” Castillo III.

Balag had been detained at the Senate premises since October 18. He was supposed to be released on November 6, but during the senate hearing, Lacson said this could not be done by the Senate because of Balag’s petition for certiorari with a prayer for a temporary restraining order (TRO) with the Supreme Court, questioning his detention at the Senate.

“Alam mo Arvin (You know Arvin), as chair I was inclined to talk to my colleagues to lift the contempt charges para ma-release ka na (so you could be released). But then you filed a petition for certiorari with prayer for TRO, so nobody wants to lose by default. So we’ll fight it out in the Supreme Court and in the meantime, you will stay longer in the Senate premises,” Lacson told

Balag during the November 6 Senate hearing.

He explained to the Aegis Juris leader that it was his petition with the high court that got him more detention time.

Balag’s petition was filed with the Supreme Court on October 25, seven days after he had been detained. (Eagle News Service)

Taxi driver allegedly hit by female motorist asks LTO to revoke her license

(Eagle News) — The 52-year-old taxi driver who was allegedly hit by a female motorist during a traffic altercation is seeking the revocation of her license.

In his four-page complaint filed before the Land Transportation Office, Virgilio Doctor said the license of Cherish Charmaine Interior should be revoked as a “pre-emptive measure” because of her violations of the Land Transportation Code.

He said Interior “intentionally and willfully” caused physical injury and damage to property when she sideswiped the taxi he was driving on Sunday, on Congressional Ave. in Project 8.

Doctor, who was seen being hit by Interior in video footage of the incident, has also accused her of destroying his



In this screenshot of a video made by Joshua Baluyot, the female driver, who has yet to be identified, is seen reprimanding driver Virgilio Doktor inside the taxi just after she reportedly slapped him. The incident took place on Sunday, December 17 on Congressional Ave., Project 8, Quezon City, c/o Joshua Baluyot/

sideview mirror, and of using a golf club to hit his taxi.

“The same are manifestations the (sic) she is not fit to

be a holder of driver’s license,” the complaint read.

Interior has apologized to Doctor in a Facebook post.

She, however, has also filed charges against Doctor before the Quezon City Prosecutors Office over the incident.

MRT-3 nakaranas na naman ng aberya



MRT-# (Larawan kuha mula sa programang “Mata ng Agila”

QUEZON CITY, Philippines (Eagle News) — Maagang nakaranas ng aberya ang mga pasahero ng Metro Rail Transit (MRT-3).

Sa abiso ng MRT-3, pinababa ang mga pasahero sa GMA-Kamuning station southbound kaninang alas 6:10 ng umaga dahil sa naranasang technical problem ng isa sa mga tren.

Nasa 1,000 pasahero ang naapektuhan ng insidente at kinailangang pababain sa tren na nagkaroon ng electrical failure.

Ayon sa abiso ng Department of Transportation (DOTr), ang naranasang electrical failure ay dahil sa “worn out electrical subcomponents” ng tren.

Dahil sa panibagong aberya, umabot na sa 22 ang naitatalang aberya sa MRT-3 ngayong buwan ng Disyembre.

Zamora accuses Mayor Gomez of “hiding” from poll officer tasked to serve notice of approved petition for conduct of San Juan elections



Supporters of defeated mayoral candidate Francis Zamora urge the Commission on Elections to “locate” San Juan Mayor Guia Gomez, in a press conference on Thursday, December 21, 2017. /Meanne Corvera/ Eagle News Service/

(Eagle News) — Former San Juan Vice Mayor Francis Zamora has accused Mayor Guia Gomez of hiding from the election officer tasked to serve the notice that the recall petition against her has been approved by the Commission on Elections.

Gomez needs to receive the notice so the Comelec can set a deadline for her reply.

“Ito’y hindi na lang pag-

tatago sa notice of sufficiency. Sa kanyang pagtatago, hindi niya na rin nagagawa ang kanyang tungkulin bilang mayor ng San Juan,” Zamora, who was defeated by Gomez in the recent local elections, said.

“We appeal to the Comelec en banc to guide the Comelec San Juan election officers on how to properly serve the notice of sufficiency as Mayor Gomez is not reporting

to work in the City Hall and is evading the election officer,” he added.

The Comelec released the resolution favoring the petition seeking a mayoralty election between defeated mayoral candidate Zamora and Gomez on Wednesday.

The petition was filed by Zamora’s supporters. (Eagle News Service)

CA affirms QC court’s guilty verdict vs Jason Ivler over road rage killing



Jason Ivler/Ivler Twitter account/

(Eagle News) — The Court of Appeals has effectively affirmed the guilty verdict meted out by a lower court against Jason Ivler for the killing of the son of a former Malacanang official in 2009.

This was after the appellate court’s 14th division junked Ivler’s appeal for the Quezon City Regional Trial Court’s Branch 84 to reverse its decision in November 2015.

In that decision, Judge Luisito Cortez found Ivler, nephew of singer Freddie Aguilar, guilty beyond reasonable doubt of shooting Renato Ebarle Jr. dead over a traffic altercation in Quezon City on November 18, 2009.

The lower court sentenced Ivler to reclusion perpetua or a maximum jail term of 40 years, and ordered him to pay the family of Ebarle, son

of Renato Ebarle Sr., presidential chief of staff under former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s administration, a total of P9.373 million for civil damages.

In its decision though, the appellate court increased the actual damages—from the original P143,890 representing burial expenses to P616,590; from P75,000 in moral damages to P100,000; and from P30,000 in exemplary damages to P100,000.

These were apart from the civil indemnity charges amounting to P100,000 the appellate court ordered Ivler to pay.

In affirming the lower court’s decision, the CA debunked Ivler’s argument that the “eyewitnesses had no ample opportunity to view the perpetrator because the crime rapidly unfolded in front of

them and they lacked focus as they were inflicted with a paralyzing fear brought by a shocking experience.”

“It is not unnatural for the eyewitnesses to have a detailed recollection of the incident especially the identity of the shooter. It is not improbable that they could, with certainty, identify Ivler as the man who shot Renato Ebarle Jr.,” the appellate court said.

The CA also emphasized that “treachery,” an element of murder, was present in the case.

The appellate court’s decision was penned by Associate Justice Ramon Cruz.

Concurring with him were Justices Ricardo Rosario and Pablito Perez. (With a report from Moira Encina, Eagle News Service)

Fire hits residential area in Alabang



Flames are seen engulfing several houses in Alabang on Tuesday morning. /Gerry Fernandez/Eagle News Service/

(Eagle News) — The fire that hit a residential area in Muntinlupa City on Tuesday, December 19, has been put out.

The Muntinlupa fire department said the blaze that hit houses on Mendiola Street, Purok Uno was declared out at 9:24 a.m. Over ten houses were affected by the fire, which reached the third alarm. The cause of the fire has yet to be determined.

No one was reported injured. (Eagle News Service)

BoC surrenders seized shabu from NAIA to PDEA; suspects also turned over to anti-drugs agency

(Eagle News) — The Bureau of Customs on Thursday surrendered around 3.5 kilograms of shabu it seized at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

The BoC also arrested Francis Melvin Feliciano and Raquel Kilaro dela Cruz, after they tried to claim the package at the FedEx warehouse using a fake identification card on Dec. 11.

The card bore the name of one Michael Espino Cruz of 121-C Kowloon St., BF Homes, Paranaque, the consignee.

The package—sent by one Jason Lee of 340 E 1st, California, USA—arrived at the airport on December 8 and had been declared as toys.

“The suspicious image shown during X-ray inspection prompted a 100 percent physical examination. The matter was referred to the Customs Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force for initial drug test which resulted positive for methamphetamine,” Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña said.

The suspects are in PDEA custody. (Eagle News Service)

TESDA regional director, natagpuang patay sa kaniyang kwarto sa Pagadian



Ang larawan ito ay kuha sa funeral homes na pinagdalan ng katawan ni Engr. Edgar Sales (Photo courtesy: Pagadian PNP)

Ni Ferdinand Libor
Eagle News Service

Natagpuang patay ang regional director ng Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) sa Western Mindanao sa loob ng kaniyang inuupahang kwarto sa isang paaralan sa Pagadian City nitong Miyerkules ng umaga.

Kinilala ng otoridad ang namatay na si Engr. Edgar Sales, 59 taong gulang,

residente sa Purok 4, Brgy. Caringan, Ozamis City.

Ayon sa driver nitong si Victor Barredo, natagpuan na niyang walang buhay si Sales sa loob ng kaniyang inuupahang kwarto sa Brgy. Balangasan.

Nagpasya umano siya na pumunta dito dahil nakatakda silang pumunta sa Dapitan City para sa isang year-end performance assessment.

Base sa imbestigation ng Pagadian-PNP wala namang indikasyon o sugat sa katawan

ng biktima na sinadya itong pinatay.

Ayon sa pulisya, posibleng namatay si Sales dahil sa cardiac arrest.

Nag-request na rin umano sila sa Pagadian City Health Center na isailalim sa post-mortem examination ang biktima para malaman nila kung walang foul play.

Sa ngayon dinala na sa funeral homes ang biktima at nakatakdang dalhin ito sa bayan ng Kabacan sa Cotabato City. (ENS)

2 pulis na binihag ng mga rebeldeng NPA, pinalaya na



Sina PO2 Alfredo Degamon at PO2 John Paul Doverte ang dalawang pulis na pinalaya ng ew People's Army sa lalawigan ng Surigao del Norte. (Photo by: Jabes Juanite)

SURIGAO CITY, Surigao del Norte (Eagle News) - Pinalaya na ang dalawang pulis na bihag ng New People's Army sa lalawigan ng Surigao del Norte.

Humigit kumulang dalawang buwan na binihag sina PO2 Alfredo Degamon at PO2 John Paul Doverte bago ang matagumpay na negosasyon sa pagitan ng gobyerno at ng nasabing grupo.

Isinailalim sa medical checkup ang dalawang pulis bago ito bumaba mula sa lugar ng Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte. (Jabes Juanite, Eagle News Service)

DPWH, tiniyak na tatapusin na ngayong buwan ang pagpapatayo ng initial housing projects sa Marawi City



Ang larawang ito ay ang kasalukuyang pabahay na ginagawa sa Marawi City. (Kuha mula sa video ng Agila Balita)

MANILA, Philippines (Eagle News) — Pinatitiyak ng Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) na tatapusin nila ang pagpapatayo ng initial housing projects sa Marawi City.

Ayon kay DPWH Secretary Mark Villar, nasa 500 mga housing unit ang target ng ahensiya na tapusin ngayong buwan ng Disyembre.

Aniya, mayroong short-term at long-term plans ang DPWH para sa pagbangon ng Marawi na winasak ng ilang buwang bakbakan sa pagitan ng tropa ng gobyerno at Maute terror group.

Binabalangkas na rin aniya ngayon ng ahensiya ang road network at master plan para sa nasabing lungsod. (ENS)

Mga negosyanteng mananamantala sa mga lugar na sinalantang 'Urduja,' kakasuhan - DTI



Bahagi ng commercial site sa Biliran. (Larawan kuha ni Vanessa Abangan)

(Eagle News) — Pinaalalahanan ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) ang mga negosyante sa eastern Visayas na huwag mananamantala sa mga residente ng lugar na sinalanta ng bagyong Urduja.

Sinabi ni Trade Undersecretary Ted Pascua na kakasuhan ng economic sabotage ang sinumang mapapatunayan na mangho-hoard ng supply ng mga pangunahing bilihin.

Dagdag rin ng opisyal na bawal din ang profiteering sa mga consumer.

Kaugnay nito, nanawagan naman si Pascua sa mga consumer na huwag nang magmadali sa pagbili dahil sapat naman umano ang suplay ng mga pangunahing bilihin.

DENR, bumuo ng task force laban sa mga ilegal na minahan



Photo courtesy: Screenshot mula sa Agila Balita

(Eagle News) — Bumuo ng isang task force si Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu laban sa illegal o small-scale miners. Isinisipi ni Cimatu sa mga illegal miner ang pagkasira ng kalikasan.

Ayon naman kay Chamber of Mines of the Philippines Chairman Gerard Brimo, maayos na ngayon ang ugnayan sa pagitan ng DENR at grupo ng mga minero kumpara noong mga nakalipas na taon.

Bukod umano kasi sa pag-adopt ng Mineral Association of Canada's o MAC mining standards, lumagda din ang COMP sa "Baguio declaration," isang commitment para sa responsible minerals development sa bansa.

Matatandaang una nang hinimok ni Cimatu ang mga mining industry na tumulong sa national development sa bansa upang mapangalagaan ang kalikasan.

Mag-asawa patay, matapos natabunan ng lupa sa San Fernando, Romblon

Ni Renand Pastor
Eagle News Service



Lugar kung saan natabunan ang mag-asawa sa San Fernando, Romblon. / Renand Pastor/Eagle News Service/

SAN FERNANDO, Romblon (Eagle News) — Natabunan ng lupa ang mag-asawa sa mismong pamamahay nito matapos tamaan ng landslide dahil sa hagupit ng bagyong Urduja noong umaga ng Linggo, Disyembre 17, sa San Fernando, Romblon.

Ayon sa kwento ng anak na nakaligtas, galing umano siya sa kapit-bahay nila ng maghatid siya ng kanilang gamit para lumikas ng pabalik na siya sa kanilang bahay nang nakita niyang mabagsakan ang kaniyang nanay na papalabas na ng kanilang bahay ng gumuhong lupa galing sa kabilang kalsada.

Sinikap pa aniya nilang tulungan ang kaniyang mga magulang subalit hindi na naisalba dahil sa dami ng lupa na natambak.

Defying Trump threat, UN rejects US decision on Jerusalem

by Carole Landry
Agence France Presse

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — Defying President Donald Trump's threat to cut off funding, the United Nations approved by a resounding vote on Thursday a motion rejecting the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution by 128 to nine with 35 abstentions, in what Palestinian UN envoy Riyad

Mansour called a "massive setback" for the United States.

An additional 21 countries did not turn up for the vote including Ukraine, which had supported the same resolution in the Security Council, indicating the US threats did have a chilling effect on some governments.

Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Togo joined the United States in opposing the measure.

Among the countries that

abstained were Argentina, Australia, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Romania and Rwanda.

Speaking at the emergency session, US Ambassador Nikki Haley warned the United States "will remember this day."

"America will put our embassy in Jerusalem," Haley said in defense of the US move, which broke with international consensus and unleashed protests across the Muslim world.

"No vote in the United Nations will make any difference on that," Haley said. "But this vote will make a difference on how Americans look at the UN and on how we look at countries who disrespect us in the UN."

"When we make generous contributions to the UN we also have a legitimate expectation that our goodwill is recognized and respected," she said.

The resolution reaffirms that the status of Jerusalem must be resolved through negotiations, and that any decision reached outside of that framework must be rescinded.

Without explicitly referencing the US move, it "affirms that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in com-

pliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the vote showed the "illegality" of Trump's decision, urging the United States to withdraw it.

'Unprecedented test'

The motion was sent to the General Assembly after it was vetoed by the United States at the Security Council on Monday, although all other 14 council members voted in favor.

While resolutions by the General Assembly are non-binding, a strong vote in support carries political weight.

Ahead of the vote, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blasted the UN as a "house of lies," saying Israel "rejects outright this vote, even before it passes."

"No General Assembly resolution will ever drive us from Jerusalem," vowed Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon.

Palestinian foreign minister Riad al-Malki called the vote an "unprecedented test" for the UN, and referenced the US warning that it was "taking names."

"History records names, it remembers names — the names of those who stand by what is right and the names of those who speak falsehood," al-Malki said.

Trump's decision on De-

cember 6 to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital prompted a flurry of appeals to the United Nations.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Trump warned that Washington would closely watch how nations voted, suggesting there could be reprisals for those that back the motion put forward by Yemen and Turkey on behalf of Arab and Muslim countries.

"They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars and then they vote against us," Trump said.

"Well, we're watching those votes. Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care."

'House of lies'

The resolution mirrored the text that was vetoed at the Security Council on Monday, and although it does not mention Trump's decision, it expresses "deep regret at recent decisions" concerning the city's status.

No country has veto powers in the General Assembly, unlike in the 15-member Security Council where the United States, along with Britain, China, France and Russia, can block any resolution.

UN diplomats privately said the United States had succeeded in making some

countries think twice.

Haley tweeted that 65 countries had "refused to condemn the United States" over its decision on Jerusalem — a tally of "no" votes, abstentions and no-shows.

"While the resolution passed, the vote breakdown tells a different story," said a spokesperson for the US mission.

"It's clear that many countries prioritized their relationship with the United States over an unproductive attempt to isolate us for a decision that was our sovereign right to make."

The Palestinian ambassador insisted the vote was more about Trump's foreign policy approach than the status of Jerusalem.

"They made it about them," said Mansour. "They did not make it about Jerusalem, so when you make it about them and to only be able to get nine votes to say 'no' to it, I think it was a complete failure for their campaign."

Israel seized the largely-Arab eastern sector of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it, claiming both sides of the city as its "eternal and undivided capital."

But the Palestinians want the eastern sector as the capital of their future state and fiercely oppose any Israeli attempt to extend sovereignty there. (AFP)

Britain's May dubbed 'Madam Brexit' by translator



A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May giving evidence to the Liaison Committee at the Houses of Parliament in central London on December 20, 2017./ AFP/

WARSAW, Poland (AFP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May was left smirking at a press conference with her Polish counterpart on Thursday after a translator accidentally called her "Madam Brexit."

May was in Warsaw for talks with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, with the discussions inevitably turning to Britain's 2019 departure from the European Union.

Part of Morawiecki's opening speech was translated as: "It's very important for us that this cooperation, even though it will be based soon on different rules and different regulations than it has been so far because of Brexit, because as Madam Brexit said, Brexit is Brexit."

May was then seen smiling as Morawiecki went on, in a moment broadcast on international television.

The two leaders signed a joint treaty on defence and security and spoke about the next phase of the Brexit negotiations, due to begin in the new year. (Agence France-Presse)

French baby-milk maker in massive new recall over salmonella fears



Samples of baby formula imported from the French group Lactalis and sold under the local brand Gloria Stage 3 are sent to a lab at the Ministry of Health in Lima on December 11, 2017./ AFP/

PARIS, France (AFP) — French baby-milk maker Lactalis said Thursday it was more than doubling the quantity of formula and other products recalled over salmonella fears in the second such move in two weeks.

"The decision was taken to extend the recall of all infant nutrition products made or packaged at our Craon site" since February, said Lactalis, which is one of the world's top manufacturers of dairy products.

The latest recall involves 720 batches of products sold in France and overseas and follows an initial recall of 625 batches, or nearly 7,000 tonnes of products, on December 10.

The new recall concerned powders and infant cereals of the group's Picot and Milumel brands, as well as the Taranis powdered amino-acid mix, the company said.

"We now know that there was scattered contamination in our Craon site following work done there during the first half of 2017," it said.

The father of a three-month-old baby girl, who drank the milk, and the UFC Que Choisir consumer association, said Monday they had filed a complaint against Lactalis. (Agence France-Presse)

White House blames North Korea for cyberattack



A man is reflected on a screen showing exchange rates of cryptocurrencies at an exchange in Seoul on December 20, 2017./ AFP/

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The White House on Tuesday publicly accused North Korea of launching a massive cyberattack that hit 150 countries last May — hobbling networks from Britain's public health system to FedEx.

"After careful investigation, the United States is publicly attributing the massive 'WannaCry' cyberattack to North Korea," said White House homeland security advisor Tom Bossert.

"We do not make this allegation lightly, we do so with evidence and we do so with partners," he added.

Exploiting a security flaw in Microsoft's Windows XP operating system, the malware infected an estimated 300,000 computers demanding ransom to decrypt data.

The United States is the latest country to point the finger of blame at Pyongyang, at-

tribution which comes as part of a drive to exert "maximum pressure" on the regime.

As yet, no retaliatory measures have been announced.

Among the infected computers were those at Britain's National Health Service (NHS), Spanish telecoms company Telefonica and US logistics company FedEx.

London had already blamed North Korea, which hit a third of Britain's public hospitals.

Pyongyang then denied the allegation, saying it went "beyond the limit of our tolerance" and was a "wicked attempt to lure the international community into harboring greater mistrust of the DPRK."

US government under scrutiny

Questions had been raised about whether the US government acted in a timely manner to respond to the at-

tack, with Microsoft accusing Washington of spotting the flaw and using it for its own ends.

"This attack provides yet another example of why the stockpiling of vulnerabilities by governments is such a problem," Microsoft's Brad Smith said at the time.

"Repeatedly, exploits in the hands of governments have leaked into the public domain and caused widespread damage," he said, claiming that the National Security Agency of spotting the flaw and saying nothing.

Bossert said that the United States kept only 10 percent of security flaws secret and had no policy of "stockpiling" or withholding information from potential targets.

Since coming to office Donald Trump has sought to put pressure on North Korea, as its reclusive leaders edge

ever-closer to developing a ballistic missile that could deliver a nuclear warhead to the United States.

Amid a series of tests Trump's administration has appeared at odds over whether talks could offer a way out of the standoff.

National Security Adviser HR McMaster tried to clean up that question in an interview with the BBC, saying the United States wanted a peaceful solution: "Of course that's what we want but we are not committed to a peaceful resolution."

"We are committed to a resolution, we want the resolution to be peaceful. But, as the president has said, all options are on the table and we have to be prepared if necessary to compel the denuclearization of North Korea without the cooperation of that regime." (Agence France-Presse)

29 dead in fitness center blaze in S. Korea: fire service



Flames and smoke billow from an eight-storey building in Jecheon, 120 kilometers southeast of Seoul, on December 21, 2017. / AFP/

SEOUL, South Korea (AFP) — At least 29 people were killed and 26 injured Thursday in a major blaze at a fitness center building in the South Korean city of Jecheon, officials said, in one of the country's deadliest fire disasters.

The fire broke out around 4:00 p.m. local time (0700 GMT) and quickly engulfed the entire eight-storey building, leaving many trapped inside.

Twenty victims were found at a public sauna and others elsewhere in the building that houses a fitness center, public bath and restaurants, the National Fire Agency said.

"The fire produced so much toxic smoke so quickly, leaving many people unable to evacuate," an agency spokesman said.

Many victims appeared to be unaware of the fire raging outside the bathhouse

until it became impossible to flee, he added.

The death toll may rise further as firefighters continue to search the building, the spokesman said.

Television footage showed the building consumed by orange flames and issuing dark plumes of smoke, as several people stood waiting to be rescued from an outdoor terrace.

Some were seen jumping from the building onto air

mattresses laid out on the ground as dozens of fire trucks and more than 100 firefighters rushed to the scene.

The blaze — believed to have started in a parking lot on the first floor — has been mostly put out, the fire agency said.

Jecheon is in central South Korea, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) southeast of the capital Seoul.

The disaster forced organizers of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to can-

cel a planned torch relay event at the city on Friday, Yonhap news agency said, citing the organizers.

"We decided to cancel the event to mourn the victims," an unnamed official at the organizing committee was quoted as saying.

The fire is South Korea's worst since 2008 when a blaze at a warehouse in the city of Icheon killed 40 workers.

President Moon Jae-In expressed regret over the acci-

dent and urged officials to make "utmost efforts" for rescue and search operations, his office said.

The worst fire ever to hit modern South Korea was an arson attack on a subway station in the southeastern city of Daegu that left 192 people dead and nearly 150 injured in 2003. (Agence France-Presse)

Pregnant woman dies in 5.2 magnitude Iran quake

TEHRAN, Iran (AFP) — A pregnant woman died and nearly 100 people were injured as a 5.2-magnitude earthquake sparked panic in the Iranian capital and neighboring areas late on Wednesday, officials said.

The epicenter of the quake, which struck shortly before 11:30 pm (2000 GMT), was just 40 kilometers (25 miles) west of the capital, according to the seismological center of the University of Tehran.

The woman died as she ran out of her home in the city of Malard, close to the epicenter, the county's prefect said.

"Ninety-seven people were injured — 50 in Alborz, 34 in the capital and 12 in

Saveh," said Morteza Salimi, head of the Iranian Red Crescent's Relief and Rescue Organization.

The quake caused no major damage but tens of thousands of people spent the night outside for fear of aftershocks.

Many of them did so in their vehicles with the engines switched on for warmth in the wintry conditions, exacerbating the thick smog that has enveloped the capital all week.

Petrol purchases in the six hours after the quake reached 10 million litres (2.64 million gallons), more than double the average full day sales even though it was in the middle of the night, the national fuel distribution company

said.

Average airborne concentration of the finest and most hazardous particles (PM2.5) rose to 170 micrograms per cubic meter, with peaks of 194 micrograms in some neighborhoods, Tehran municipality said.

That is some seven times higher than the World Health Organization recommended maximum of 25 micrograms per m3 over a 24-hour period.

Iran sits atop several fault lines, and Wednesday's quake is the latest in a series to have hit the country in recent weeks.

A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck the southeastern province of Kerman on December 13, leaving at least 18

people injured.

On November 12, the western province of Kerman-shah was hit by a 7.3-magnitude quake that killed 620 people.

Iran's deadliest quake in recent years was a 6.6-magnitude tremor that struck the southeast in 2003, decimating the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killing at least 31,000 people.

In 1990, a 7.4-magnitude quake in northern Iran killed 40,000 people, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless, reducing dozens of towns and nearly 2,000 villages to rubble. (Agence France-Presse)

UN to vote on new N. Korea sanctions targeting oil

by Carole Landry
Agence France Presse



In this photo taken on July 21, 2017, a petrol station worker walks past a fuel truck in Pyongyang. / AFP/

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — The UN Security Council will vote Friday on a US-drafted resolution ramping up sanctions on North Korea by restricting oil supplies vital for Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programs.

The United States has been in negotiations with China, Pyongyang's ally, on slapping new sanctions in response to the November 28 test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

The vote is scheduled for 1:00 pm (1800 GMT), diplomats said.

Building on previous sanctions resolutions, the new draft tightens restrictions on crude and refined oil deliveries to North Korea, most of which are supplied by China.

The measure would ban the supply of nearly 90 percent of refined oil products to North Korea and order the repatriation of all North Korean nationals working abroad within 12 months, according to the text obtained by AFP.

US President Donald Trump asked Chinese President Xi Jinping last month to cut off oil to North Korea, a move that would deal a crippling blow to its desperately struggling economy.

Tens of thousands of North Koreans have been sent to Russia and China to earn hard currency for Pyongyang, working in what UN rights officials have described as "slave-like conditions."

The draft resolution would cap crude oil supplies to four million barrels per year and require countries to seek UN permission to ship crude to North Korea.

Deliveries of refined petroleum products including diesel and kerosene would be capped at 500,000 barrels for next year, according to the measure that would order all countries to report their shipments to the United Nations.

Since last year, North Korea has carried out a nuclear test — its sixth — and a series of advanced missile launches which are banned under UN resolutions.

Seizing ships
The measure would expand a list of banned exports from North Korea to include food products, machinery, electrical equipment, earth and stone including magnesite and magnesia, wood and vessels. (Agence France-Presse)

Puigdemont says 'no one can dispute' Catalan separatists won vote

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — Deposed Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont said from self-imposed exile in Belgium that it was indisputable that separatists had won Thursday's key regional vote.

"This is a result which no one can dispute," Puigdemont told supporters in Brussels as partial results showed that pro-independence parties were on course for an absolute majority.

"I think we have earned our right to be listened to."

As loyalists shouted "president, president," Puigdemont also lashed out at Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who called the election in a bid to end Spain's worst political crisis in decades.

Puigdemont said it was "a slap" for the Spanish premier, adding: "Rajoy has lost the mandate he sought."

Puigdemont was axed as president of Catalonia after holding an independence referendum that Madrid deemed



Deposed Catalanian president Carles Puigdemont gives a press conference after 95 percent of the results of the regional elections in Catalonia are known at the Square - Brussels Meeting Center in Brussels on December 21, 2017. / AFP /

illegal.

He and four former ministers then fled to Belgium to avoid charges of rebellion and sedition. Spain dropped a European arrest warrant for them earlier this month but they still face arrest if they return to their homeland.

Puigdemont said he also aimed to win the support of the European Union for his cause, but it has so far backed Rajoy, saying it backs constitutional order, and that it is an internal matter for Spain.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the 28-nation bloc, said that its stance remained the same whatever the result of Thursday's vote.

"Our position on the question of Catalonia is well known and has been regularly restated, at all levels. It will not change," commission spokesman Alexander Winterstein told AFP.

"In relation to a regional election, we have no comment to make." (AFP)

Nine foreigners among Melbourne car attack injured

MELBOURNE, Australia (AFP) — A man who mowed down pedestrians with his car in Melbourne attributed his actions to “perceived mistreatment of Muslims,” Australia said Friday, with nine foreigners among the injured.

Nineteen people were rushed to the hospital, and three remain critical, after the Australian-Afghan driver ploughed through a busy downtown intersection on Thursday in what authorities said was a “deliberate act.”

The 32-year-old, who came to Australia as a refugee, has a history of drug abuse and mental problems and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull reiterated there was no links to terrorism “at this stage.”

“To be attacked like this, in the middle of one of our great cities, is a shocking event, a shocking crime,” Turnbull said.

“He has said, in a number of what the police are describing as utterings, that he attributed his actions to perceived mistreatment of Muslims.

“But at this stage, be-

cause investigations are continuing, apart from that statement, there are no known links to any political issues, or any links to extremist groups, and I am advised at the moment that no terrorism link has been identified.”

The man, who was wrestled from the car by an off-duty police officer, was due to undergo a psychiatric assessment later Friday.

Turnbull said nine foreigners were among those hurt, including three South Korean tourists, according to the country’s Yonhap news agency.

Melbourne’s Herald Sun said the other victims came from China, Italy, India, Venezuela, Ireland, and New Zealand, with the city full of tourists for the festive season.

Turnbull assured Australians Thursday’s carnage was an isolated incident and “we should continue to go about our daily lives in the way we always do.”

Melbourne began returning to normal on Friday, with roads reopened.

But there was a boosted armed police presence, with a candlelight event scheduled

for December 24 and the Boxing Day cricket test between Australia and England taking place nearby.

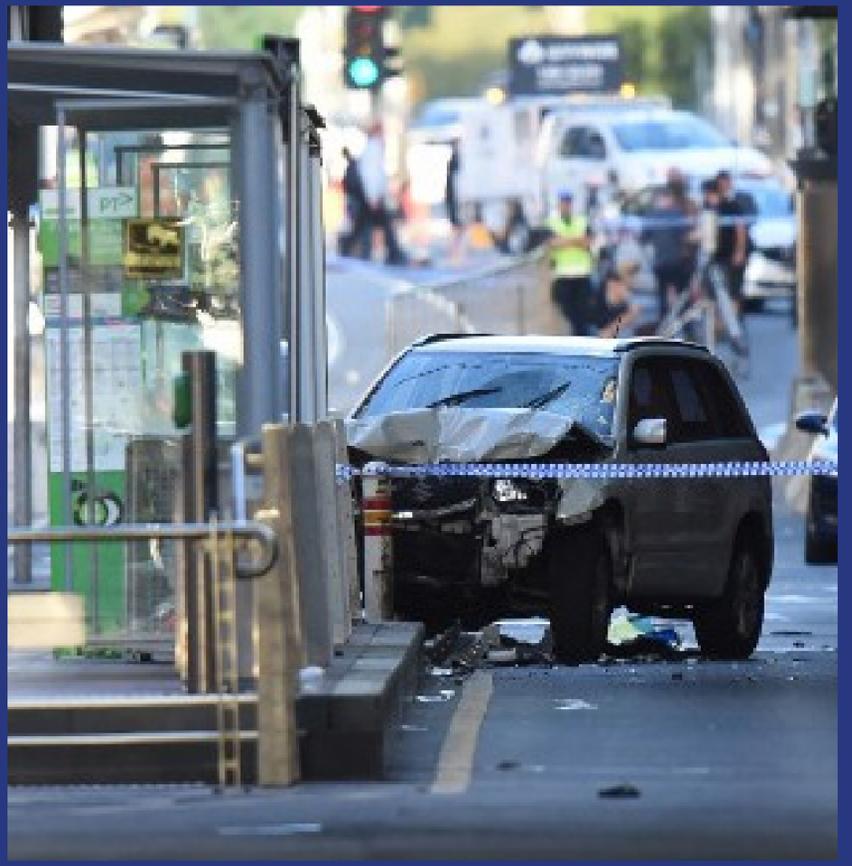
Thursday’s incident came after a car rammed into pedestrians in Melbourne’s busiest mall in January, killing six people. The driver, whose case is still being heard in court, was a drug addict and had allegedly just stabbed his brother.

Canberra has become increasingly worried about homegrown extremism and officials say they have prevented 13 terror attacks on home soil in the past few years.

The government in August unveiled a strategy aimed at preventing vehicle attacks in crowded public places.

Suggested steps include deterrent options like fencing and closed circuit cameras, and delaying approaches such as trees and bollards to slow down vehicles.

Melbourne has also been installing a public siren system and more security cameras to warn people of a possible terrorist attack or other serious threats. (Agence France-Presse)



A white SUV (C) sits in the middle of the road as police and emergency personnel work at the scene where a car ran over pedestrians in Flinders Street in Melbourne on December 21, 2017./AFP/

Eric Schmidt stepping down as chair of Alphabet board

by Glenn Chapman
Agence France Presse

SAN FRANCISCO, United States (AFP) — Google’s parent company Alphabet on Thursday announced that Eric Schmidt will step down as chairman, remaining on the board but shifting into a role as a technical adviser.

“In recent years, I’ve been spending a lot of my time on science and technology issues, and philanthropy, and I plan to expand that work,” Schmidt said in a release.

Schmidt’s stint as executive chairman is to end at a regularly-scheduled board meeting next month, according to Alphabet.

Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin recruited the proven businessman and skilled software engineer as chief executive in 2001, bringing a mature hand to the helm of the then three-year-old internet search company.

Schmidt, Page, and Brin were considered a power triumvirate in control of Google. Page replaced Schmidt as chief executive a decade later, but Schmidt remained at the head of the board of directors.

“Eric has provided us with business and engineering expertise and a clear vision about the future of technology,” Alphabet chief Page said in a release.

“Continuing his 17 years of service to the company, he’ll now be helping us as a technical advisor on science and technology issues.”

About two years ago, Google unveiled a surprise corporate overhaul, forming a new parent company dubbed Alphabet to include internet search and a handful of independent companies.

Page became chief executive at Alphabet, a holding company for the tech giant’s search products and “other bets” such as Waymo self-driving car unit; Nest smart home gadgets, and Google Fiber internet service.

Sundar Pichai was promoted to chief of Google, which includes leading online video-sharing service YouTube.

Schmidt went from being executive chairman at Google to having the same role at Alphabet.

“Larry, Sergey, Sundar and I all believe that the time is right in Alphabet’s evolution for this transition,” Schmidt said.

“The Alphabet structure is working well, and Google and the Other Bets are thriving.”

Poaching people

During his tenure, Schmidt wound up at the center of a civil suit in US federal court over an “anti-poaching”



Executive Chairman Alphabet Inc. Eric Schmidt gestures as he speaks during a session at The Viva Technology Event in Paris on June 15, 2017. / AFP/

agreement involving tech giants Apple, Google, Intel and Adobe.

The long-running case alleged that major tech companies in Silicon Valley had secret agreements not to hire each other’s employees, in a move to keep salaries under control.

The lawsuit, which led to a \$415 million settlement, alleged that the late Apple chief Steve Jobs, Google chairman Schmidt and other tech executives were part of the conspiracy.

Other companies in the lawsuit which reached earlier settlements included eBay, Lu-

casfilm, Pixar and Intuit.

Schmidt served for a few years on the Apple board of directors, but left there in 2009 as iPhone maker’s rivalry with Android-backer Google intensified.

Schmidt ranks among the world’s richest people. A Forbes real-time tracker on Thursday pegged his net worth at \$13.8 billion, with most of that held in the form of Alphabet shares.

Schmidt was listed as a donor and adviser to the winning campaign by Barack Obama to become US president in 2008. (Agence France-Presse)

Iran ‘strongly denies’ arming Yemen rebels

TEHRAN, Iran (AFP) — Tehran strongly denied on Wednesday, December 20 that it had supplied weapons to Yemeni rebels which they used in attacks on its archfoe Saudi Arabia as alleged by both Riyadh and Washington.

“We have no arms link with Yemen,” foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi told the ISNA news agency, after Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted a rebel missile over Riyadh on Tuesday that it suggested was “Iranian-manufactured.”

“The accusation that Iran gives weapons to various groups is rejected and we strongly deny it,” he said.

“Yemen is in a blockade and such possibility does not exist anyway.”

The audacious attack aimed at the heart of Saudi power follows the downing of another missile last month near Riyadh airport that triggered the tightening of a Saudi-led blockade on hunger-stricken Yemen.

Weapons used by the rebels “to defend against violation and non-stop attacks” are leftovers of previous governments, Ghasemi said.

“There isn’t even the

possibility of sending humanitarian aid.”

A Saudi-led coalition has been battling Shiite rebels in Yemen since March 2015 and has repeatedly accused Shiite Iran of backing its co-religionists.

“The possession of Iranian-manufactured ballistic weapons by terrorist organisations, including the Iran-backed Huthi militia, is a threat to regional and international security,” coalition spokesman said on Tuesday.

US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley described the strike as bearing “all the hallmarks of previous attacks using Iranian-provided weapons.”

She said Washington would be discussing options for Security Council action against Tehran, although that immediately drew strong reservations from Moscow.

More than 8,750 people have been killed since Saudi Arabia and its allies joined the beleaguered government’s fight against the rebels, triggering what the UN has called the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. (Agence France-Presse)

Apple admits to slowing iPhones as batteries age

SAN FRANCISCO, United States (AFP) — Apple on Thursday, December 21 confirmed what some conspiracy theorists suspected, that it intentionally slows performance of older iPhones as batteries weaken from age.

The admission played into concerns that Apple was stealthily nudging iPhone users to upgrade to newer models by letting them think it was the handset that needed replacing and that it was not just a matter of getting new batteries.

“Our goal is to deliver

the best experience for customers, which includes overall performance and prolonging the life of their devices,” an Apple spokesperson said in response to an AFP inquiry.

“Lithium-ion batteries become less capable of supplying peak current demands when in cold conditions, have a low battery charge or as they age over time, which can result in the device unexpectedly shutting down to protect its electronic components.”

Lithium-ion batteries are commonly used in mobile devices, and charging capacity naturally wanes with use and time.



This file photo taken on September 22, 2017 shows an Apple logo on the outside of an Apple store in San Francisco, California. / AFP/

Meanwhile, smartphone operating software is perpetually improved with updates that typically increase appetites for electricity.

Last year, Apple introduced a feature to “smooth

out” spikes in demand for power to prevent iPhone 6 models from shutting down due to the cold or weak batteries, according to the California-based company.

The iPhone 6 made its

debut in late 2014.

The feature, which slows performance to demand less power, has been extended to iPhone 7 handsets with the latest iOS operating software and will be added to other Apple products “in the future,” the spokesperson said.

Apple releases new iPhone models annually, and sales of the handsets power its money-making engine.

People worried about performance could replace batteries, which Apple does for free for iPhones covered by warranty or for \$79 if that is not the case.

Apple design of handsets

makes it borderline impossible for people to change batteries themselves.

Rumors have persisted for years at tech news websites devoted to Apple products and among fans of the company’s products that iPhone performance was being intentionally slowed, perhaps to push users to buy newer models.

The consumer electronics industry overall has routinely been accused of designing products that wear out sooner than necessary in a strategy referred to as “planned obsolescence.” (Agence France-Presse)