



# International Herald Tribune

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## South Korea captivated by an unusual political star

SEOUL

**Bookish entrepreneur is a presidential favorite — if he decides to run**

BY CHOE SANG-HUN

Two days before Seoul elected a mayor last month, Ahn Cheol-soo showed up at the campaign headquarters of Park Won-soon, an independent candidate. Amid flashing cameras, Mr. Ahn, a soft-spoken university dean, who had earlier been seen as a contender for mayor himself, affirmed his support for Mr. Park, entrusted him with a written statement and then left.

“When we participate in an election, we citizens can become our own masters, principle can defeat irregularity and privilege, and common sense can drive out absurdity,” read Mr. Ahn’s statement, an open appeal to voters that quickly spread by way of Twitter and other networks. “I’m going to the voting station early in the morning. Please join me.”

It was a pivotal moment in an election whose outcome has rocked South Korea. In a country where resentment of social and economic inequality is on the rise, and where many believe that their government serves the privileged rather than the common good, Mr. Ahn’s words — “participate,” “principle,” “common sense” — propelled younger voters to throw their support overwhelmingly to Mr. Park, the first independent candidate to win South Korea’s second-most-influential elected office. Nearly 30 percent of voters who backed Mr. Park on Oct. 26 did so because of Mr. Ahn, an exit poll found.

After setting off what stunned politicians called a “tsunami,” Mr. Ahn retreated from public view, declining all requests for interviews.

Yet he remains South Korea’s hottest political star. His name has become an



Ahn Cheol-soo, South Korean academic, entrepreneur and reluctant politician.

emblem for widespread disillusion with the existing political parties. Last week, 25 younger lawmakers from President Lee Myung-bak’s governing Grand National Party, responding to the party’s loss in the mayoral race, demanded that the president apologize for “arrogance and disconnectedness.” Recent surveys have found that if the next presidential election were held today and Mr. Ahn were a candidate, he would win.

Politicians have called on him to clarify whether he intends to run in the December 2012 presidential election, but he has kept silent. Mr. Park said last week that he did not know whether Mr. Ahn would

*SOUTH KOREA, PAGE 4*



At the front lines of a highway blockade in Gamgiphai, in Manipur State. The Kuki tribal group is enforcing the blockade because it wants its own administrative district in the area.

## In a mini-India, blockades come with the territory

IMPHAL, INDIA

**Remote northeast state with 36 tribes finds it hard to keep all happy**

BY LYDIA POLGREEN

All summer, Homindon Singh Lisam’s phone rang off the hook. As a doctor and hospital administrator in India’s remote Manipur State, he is no stranger to triage. But this was different.

The Kuki tribal group, seeking the creation of a separate administrative dis-

trict in its area, imposed a blockade in August, severing the only two roads that lead here, and with them Dr. Lisam’s access to crucial medical supplies. Oxygen canisters, vital for surgery, were already scarce. All nonemergency procedures were canceled indefinitely.

“Many patients come to me and beg to get their surgeries done,” Dr. Lisam said. “I tell them: ‘A hernia can wait.’”

It is an astonishing but true fact, and it is indicative of India’s peculiar challenges, that an entire state of the world’s most populous democracy, and a rising economic power, can still be held hostage by a small ethnic group demanding a relatively modest amount of

local administrative control.

India’s remote northeast is attached to the rest of the country by a slender thread of territory that arcs over the northern border of Bangladesh. It lies at the crossroads of India, Myanmar, China and Nepal, an ethnic and religious crazy quilt populated by a diverse mix of indigenous tribes. In addition to Muslims and Hindus, many of the tribes are Christian or practice smaller, traditional religions.

That makes for fractious politics all over, from the eastern end of West Bengal to the deepest reaches of Arunachal Pradesh, from Assam to Tripura. Some places have suffered through full-fledged insurgencies while

others have remained simmering for decades on a lower boil. Violence has dropped sharply in Manipur, once one of the most insurgent-wracked states in the country. But the state remains fragile.

“Manipur is like a mini-India,” Nongthomban Biren, a state government minister and spokesman, said in an interview at his home. “There are 36 tribes in such a small state. We have to be very careful. If something is happening, and it hurts someone’s sentiments, it is a big problem.”

Only two roads connect this state to the rest of India, leaving it vulnerable to blockade by whatever group has a gripe

*INDIA, PAGE 4*

## Google, looking far ahead, chases its wildest dreams

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA

BY CLAIRE CAIN MILLER AND NICK BILTON

In a top-secret laboratory in an undisclosed San Francisco Bay area location where robots run free, the future is being imagined.

It is a place where your refrigerator could be connected to the Internet, so it could order groceries when they ran low. Your dinner plate could post to a social network what you are eating. Your robot could go to the office while you stay home in your pajamas. And you could, perhaps, take an elevator to outer space.

These are just a few of the dreams being chased at Google X, the clandestine

lab where Google is tackling a list of 100 shoot-for-the-stars ideas. In interviews, a dozen people discussed the list; some work at the lab or elsewhere at Google, and some have been briefed on the project. But none would speak for attribution because Google is so secretive about the effort that many of its employees do not even know the lab exists.

Although most of the ideas on the list are in the conceptual stage, nowhere near reality, two people briefed on the project said one product would be released by the end of the year, although they would not say what it was.

“They’re pretty far out in front right now,” said Rodney Brooks, a professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s computer science and



Sebastian Thrun, an expert in artificial intelligence, helps lead Google’s secret lab.

artificial intelligence lab and founder of Heartland Robotics. “But Google’s not an ordinary company, so almost nothing applies.”

At most Silicon Valley companies, in-

novation means developing online apps or ads, but Google sees itself as different. Even as Google has grown into a major corporation and technology startups are biting at its heels, the lab reflects its ambition to be a place where ground-breaking research and development are happening, in the tradition of Xerox PARC, which developed the modern personal computer in the 1970s.

A Google spokeswoman, Jill Hazelbaker, declined to comment on the lab but said that investing in speculative projects was an important part of Google’s DNA. “While the possibilities are incredibly exciting, please do keep in mind that the sums involved are very small by comparison to the investments we make in

*GOOGLE, PAGE 19*

**BUSINESS ASIA**

**Signs of strength in Japan**

The Japanese economy grew at a 6 percent annualized rate in the third quarter, the first increase in four quarters, showing a recovery from the earthquake and tsunami. *PAGE 16*

**With fast Internet, higher risk**

Statistics dictate that the vastly greater number of transactions among faster computers will lead to a greater number of accidents. *PAGE 16*

**Coal gas opposed in Australia**

The Australian coal-seam gas industry is facing pressure from both ends of the political spectrum, James Grubel writes. *PAGE 19*

**PAGE TWO**

**The Heartland’s Hispanic boom**

In small U.S. towns long accustomed to a population drain, Hispanics have reversed the trend, drawing approval from some residents but furrowed brows from others.



**WORLD NEWS**

**Unforgotten** Ethnic Turks holding a vigil in Berlin for the victims of racist attacks. Neo-Nazis are suspected in a vast, decade-long crime wave. *PAGE 5*

**Obama focuses on job creation**

The U.S. president tied the economic success of the Asia-Pacific region to American job growth. *PAGE 3*

**States allowing felons to rearm**

Legal loopholes mean that many Americans with violent records are regaining their gun rights. *PAGE 6*

**VIEWS**

**James Carroll**

As upward mobility has stalled, ranking has crept into more and more aspects of American life — at a time when America’s pre-eminence in the world looks increasingly hollow. *PAGE 8*

**Afghans in transition**

Most Afghans see progress in the quality of their lives. Will that survive the transition? Karl F. Inderfurth and Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., assess the results of an Asia Foundation survey. *PAGE 8*

**ONLINE**

**When CBS hit ‘reply to all’**

It is not exactly a secret that the U.S. news media tend to devote more coverage to perceived front-runners in presidential campaigns. But someone at CBS News last week made the mistake of saying basically that in an e-mail and accidentally sending it to the campaign of Rep. Michele Bachmann, a Republican candidate polling in the single digits. [global.nytimes.com/us](http://global.nytimes.com/us)

**NEWSSTAND PRICES**

Bali RP 23,000 (including PPN)	Hong Kong HK\$ 21.00	Malaysia RM 7.50	Philippines Peso 90.00	Taiwan NT 105.00
Bangladesh Tk. 135.0	India Rs 30.00	Maldives US\$ 3.80	Seoul Won 1,700	Thailand Baht 65.00
Bangkok Baht 70.00	Indonesia RP 23,000 (PPN Incl.)	Maria Pesa 90.00	Singapore US\$ 4.20 (GST Incl.)	Vietnam US\$ 3.80
Brunel B\$ 8.00	Jakarta RP 23,000 (including PPN)	Myanmar US\$ 4.20	Sri Lanka* RS 660.00 (VAT Incl.)	
Cambodia US\$ 3.00	Japan Yen 160 (Tax Included)	Nepal NRs 25.00	Sydney A\$ 8.25 (GST Incl.)	
China RMB 27.00	Macau P 21.00	Pakistan RS 20.00	Taipei NT\$ 105.00	

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**CURRENCIES** NEW YORK, MONDAY 10:00AM

	NEW YORK, MONDAY 10:00AM	PREVIOUS
▼ Euro	€1= \$1.3650	\$1.3750
▼ Pound	£1= \$1.5930	\$1.6070
▲ Yen	¥1= ¥76.980	¥77.110
▲ S. Franc	₣1= ₣70.9050	₣70.9100

Full currency rates Page 20

**STOCK INDEXES** MONDAY

▼ The Dow 10:00am	12,120.31	-0.27%
▼ FTSE 100 3pm	5,506.69	-0.70%
▲ Nikkei 225 close	8,603.70	+1.05%

**OIL** NEW YORK, MONDAY 10:00AM

▼ Light sweet crude	\$98.41	-\$0.54
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