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AT A GLANCE

Her last birthday as a royal

Princess Sayako, the only daughter of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, on Monday celebrated her 36th birthday, her last as an imperial family member. Under the Imperial House Law, Sayako, who is formally betrothed to Yoshiaki Kuroda, 39, a Tokyo metropolitan government employee, must shed her title upon marrying a commoner.

Carradine to portray Bush

Keith Carradine as George W Bush? Carradine, who appeared in such cult Robert Altman films as Nashville and Thieves Like Us as well as on Broadway in The Will Rogers Follies, will portray the president in the American premiere of David Hare's play about the lead-up to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The drama, which will open on June 5, also stars Julian Sands as British Prime Minister Tony Blair.



Family letters as cultural heritage

China has begun collecting handwritten letters between family members from Chinese people both at home and abroad, as experts say they may become precious cultural heritage with the development of modern correspondence technologies like e-mails.

"These letters are a package of various cultures in literature, aesthetics and calligraphy. They also reflect the development of China's traditional rites, papermaking industry, post and package services," said Mr Bai Gengsheng, deputy director of the China Folk Literature and Art Society, in charge of the collection project. "They have not only helped maintain the emotional attachment between family members but also record the changing society over the past hundreds or even thousands of years," Mr Bai said. He worries that the next generation may know little about handwritten letters as an increasing number of people have turned to e-mails, cell phones and other modern channels for

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communication.

Chocolate art spells sweet success

Australian painter Sid Chidiac’s works are entirely made of fine Belgian chocolate. When Chidiac introduces himself as an oil and chocolate painter, most people assume they have misheard him.

In the past three years, the 36-year-old has conjured up dozens of works from pure chocolate — complete with edible frame, canvas and richly-coloured paint —portraits ranging from Marilyn Monroe to chat-show host Oprah Winfrey.

His tantalising technique uses a rich blend of white chocolate — copiously donated by a major chocolate maker — and a range of simple food colourings.

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