

The Asian Reporter

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A Sumatran rhino calf born in Indonesia adds to the critically endangered species



CHERISHED CALF. In this undated photo released by the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, a newly born Sumatran rhino calf walks in its enclosure at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary at Way Kambas National Park in Indonesia. The critically endangered Sumatran rhino was born on Sumatra Island on November 25, 2023, the second Sumatran rhino born in the country this year and a welcome addition to a species that currently numbers fewer than 50 animals. Most of the remaining rhinos live on Sumatra, several in captivity. They are threatened by destruction of tropical forest habitat and poachers who kill the animals for their horns, which are prized for making ornaments and for use in traditional medicine in China and other parts of Asia. See story on page 4. (Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry via AP)



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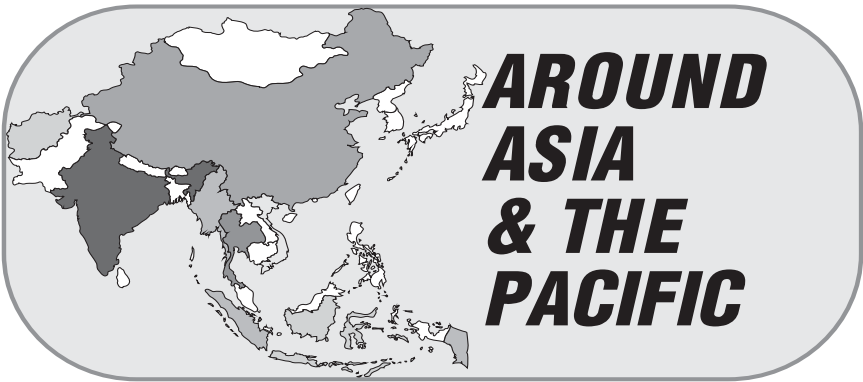
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Nepal bans TikTok, saying it disrupts social harmony

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Nepal’s government has banned the popular social media app TikTok, saying it was disrupting “social harmony” in the country. Foreign minister Narayan Prakash Saud said the app was banned immediately. “The government has decided to ban TikTok as it was necessary to regulate the use of the social media platform that was disrupting social harmony, goodwill, and flow of indecent materials,” Saud said. He said that to make social media platforms accountable, the government has asked the companies to register and open a liaison office in Nepal, pay taxes, and abide by the country’s laws and regulations. It wasn’t clear what triggered the ban or if TikTok had refused to comply with Nepal’s requests. TikTok, owned by China’s ByteDance, has faced scrutiny in a number of countries because of concerns that Beijing could use the app to harvest user data or advance its interests. Countries including the United States, Britain, and New Zealand have banned the app on government phones despite TikTok repeatedly denying that it has ever shared data with the Chinese government and would not do so if asked. Nepal banned all pornographic sites in 2018.

Toyota selling part of Denso stake to raise cash

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota is selling a part of its stake in components maker Denso to raise cash for its drive toward electric vehicles (EVs) and other innovations, Japan’s top automaker said. The move is estimated to raise about 290 billion yen (\$2 billion), given recent share prices. The number of shares Toyota Motor Corp. plans to sell total more than 124 million shares, lowering its stake in Denso Corp. from 24.2% to 20%, while remaining the top stakeholder. “We don’t want to just hold on to our assets. We want to make them living assets that feed into the growth of our company,” said Masahiro Yamamoto, an executive in the accounting group at Toyota. Toyota said the money will also go into developing smart-driving technology and a wide range of other initiatives ongoing in the industry. Yamamoto did not give a specific date for the sale, but it’s expected to happen soon. All the world’s major automakers are working on strengthening their lineup of electric vehicle and other green cars, as concerns grow about climate change. That requires a great deal of investment. Toyota affiliates, Toyota Industries and Aisin, are also selling a portion of their Denso shares, officials said. Toyota officials have acknowledged they have fallen behind in the industry shift toward electric vehicles, and they have been aggressively playing catch-up. Toyota, which makes the Camry sedan, Lexus luxury models, and the Prius hybrid, leads the world in hybrids, which switch back and forth between a gas engine and electric motor to deliver a fuel-efficient drive. It also has a strong lineup in fuel cells, which run on hydrogen and are zero-emission. In July, Toyota sold a part of its stake in telecoms company KDDI Corp., raising nearly 250 billion yen (\$1.7 billion). Toyota officials hinted other such offers may be in the works but declined to give specifics.

127 Malaysians suspected job-scam victims rescued

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — More than 120 suspected victims of job scams have been rescued after being stranded by fighting in northern Myanmar between the military and armed ethnic groups, Malaysia’s government said. The number of Malaysians rescued surged from an initial 26 to 127, foreign minister Zambray Abd Kadir told local media. The foreign ministry earlier had said the group was stranded in Laukkaing, a town known as a notorious hub for online scams, gambling, and other major organized crimes. Fighting has continued in northern Myanmar after an alliance of armed ethnic minority groups launched a surprise offensive. They have seized control of several border crossings to China, in a major disruption to trade.

Fiji hopes to work with China to upgrade its shipyards, ports

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Fiji’s leader says that after meeting with China’s President Xi Jinping, he hopes to collaborate with China on upgrading his nation’s shipyards and ports. Sitiveni Rabuka made the remarks to lawmakers in parliament in late November. Rabuka is generally viewed as leaning less toward China than his predecessor Frank Bainimarama, and in a visit to Australia in October, Rabuka emphasized he was “more comfortable dealing with traditional friends” such as Australia. But in his recent remarks, Rabuka highlighted the economic ties his small South Pacific island nation has forged with China over 50 years of diplomatic relations. Rabuka said that in his meeting with Xi on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in San Francisco, he discussed how China’s assistance was pivotal to Fiji’s post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Rabuka said China’s Belt and Road Initiative aligned with Fiji’s development agenda and that China had contributed toward a number of grants and assistance packages. “As we navigate economic challenges, discussions are underway to address our debt crisis responsibly,” Rabuka said. He said a key focus of creating sustainable economic growth in Fiji was the comprehensive upgrade of infrastructure, particularly port facilities and shipyards. “I anticipate potential collaboration with China in that endeavor, given China’s globally competitive shipbuilding,” Rabuka said. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing that China and Fiji are good friends and partners, and have previously cooperated on infrastructure. “The goal is to support island countries in making life better for their people and achieving development and prosperity,” Mao said. Fiji’s move comes as China looks to expand its influence in the Pacific. Last year, China fell short in an ambitious attempt to get 10 small Pacific nations to sign to a sweeping deal covering everything from security to fisheries. The attempt came after Solomon Islands signed a security pact with China, a move that raised alarm throughout the Pacific.



LIGHT ACHIEVEMENT. Lamps light up the banks of the Saryu River on the eve of the Hindu festival of Diwali, in Ayodhya, India. Ayodhya city in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh set a record by lighting more than 2.2 million earthen oil lamps during Deepotsav celebrations on the eve of Diwali, creating a new Guinness World Record for lighting lamps in such a large number, according to the state tourism department. (AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh)

Millions of Indians set a world record celebrating Diwali as worries about air pollution rise

By Biswajeet Banerjee
The Associated Press

L UCKNOW, India — Millions of Indians celebrated Diwali in mid-November with a Guinness World Record number of bright earthen oil lamps as concerns about air pollution soared in the South Asian country.

Across the country, dazzling multi-colored lights decked homes and streets as devotees celebrated the annual Hindu festival of light symbolizing the victory of light over darkness.

But the spectacular and much-awaited massive lighting of the oil lamps took place — as usual — at the Saryu River, in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh state, the birthplace of their most revered deity, the god Ram.

At dusk, devotees lit more than 2.22 million lamps and kept them burning for 45 minutes as Hindu religious hymns filled the air at the banks of the river, setting a new world record. Last year, more than 1.5 million earthen lamps were lit.

After counting the lamps, Guinness Book of World Records representatives presented a record certificate to the state’s top elected official, Yogi Adityanath.

Over 24,000 volunteers, mostly college students, helped prepare for the new record, said Pratibha Goyal, vice-chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University, in Ayodhya.

Diwali, a national holiday across India, is celebrated by socializing and exchanging gifts with family and friends. Many light earthen oil lamps or candles, and fireworks are set off as part of the celebrations. In the evening, a special prayer is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, who is believed to bring luck

and prosperity.

Authorities ran extra trains to accommodate the huge numbers of people trying to reach their hometowns to join family celebrations.

The festival came as worries about air quality in India rose. A “hazardous” 400-500 level had been recorded on the air quality index, more than 10 times the global safety threshold, which can cause acute and chronic bronchitis and asthma attacks. But on that day, unexpected rain and a strong wind improved the levels to 220, according to the government-run Central Pollution Control Board.

Air pollution levels were expected to soar again after the celebrations ended because of the fireworks used.

Before the celebration, officials in New Delhi shut down primary schools and banned polluting vehicles and construction work in an attempt to reduce the worst haze and smog of the season, which posed respiratory problems for people and enveloped monuments and high-rise buildings in and around India’s capital.

Authorities deployed water sprinklers and anti-smog guns to control the haze and many people used masks to escape the air pollution.

New Delhi tops the list almost every year among the many Indian cities with poor air quality, particularly in the winter, when the burning of crop residues in neighboring states coincides with cooler temperatures that trap deadly smoke.

Some Indian states have banned the sale of fireworks and imposed other restrictions to stem the pollution. Authorities have also urged residents to light “green crackers” that emit less pollutants than normal firecrackers. But similar bans have often been disregarded

Continued on page 4



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WORLD OF FROZEN. Visitors line up to enter the World of Frozen themed area during its opening ceremony on November 20, 2023 at Disneyland in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Disneyland has opened its first Frozen-themed attraction. The new section of the park features landscapes and characters from the popular movie and two new rides, a roller coaster, and a boat ride. (AP Photo/Louise Delmotte)

Disneyland’s \$60 billion expansion means parks in Hong Kong and Shanghai are only getting bigger

By Zen Soo
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong Disneyland has opened its first Frozen-themed attraction, with thousands of eager visitors turning up to experience the new rides, some lining up for hours to get an early start.

Based on Disney’s wildly popular *Frozen* animation film, the new section of the park features landscapes and characters from the movie and two new rides, a roller coaster, and a boat ride that takes visitors through different scenes featured in the film.

“Over the past decade, the film has grown into one of the most successful franchises in Disney history,” said Josh D’Amaro, chairman of Disney Experiences. “World of Frozen represents Hong Kong Disneyland’s largest and boldest expansion since the park opened in 2005.”

The opening comes after Disney announced in September a \$60 billion expansion of its parks and cruises over about a decade. Now that Chinese tourists are venturing abroad again after the pandemic, the new attraction is meant to be a game changer for a theme park that has run losses for years.

Some of the hundreds of Disney fans who lined up hours ahead of time were dressed like characters from *Frozen*.

Disney enthusiast Bryan Darmanic, who had travelled from California with his wife and daughter, were among the first visitors to the *Frozen*-themed roller coaster and received limited edition souvenirs to commemorate the experience.

“The World of Frozen is really well-designed and beautiful,” said Darmanic, whose family was making its first visit to the Hong Kong theme park.

Winnie Ip, a tourist from Macao, said she arrived at 9 o’clock in the morning ahead of the opening of the *Frozen* section.

The *Frozen* attractions were “magnificent,” Ip said.

Hong Kong has been beefing up the park to try and draw more visitors. In June 2022, it debuted its Momentous multimedia and fireworks show, which is staged at its castle on most nights.

Elsewhere, Disney plans to launch a Zootopia-themed area at Shanghai Disneyland in December, a Fantasy Springs port at Tokyo DisneySea next spring, and a *Frozen*-themed Kingdom of Arendelle at Disneyland Paris, slated to open in either 2024 or 2025.

Scotland bids farewell to its giant pandas that are returning to China after 12-year stay

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP) — Visitors to the Edinburgh Zoo had their final chance on November 30 to see and bid farewell to a pair of popular giant pandas who are returning home to China after more than a decade in Scotland.

Yang Guang and Tian Tian — or Sunshine and Sweetie — are leaving this month after a 12-year stay. They have been a popular attraction since people lined the road outside the zoo to greet them when they arrived in 2011.

They are the latest pandas to leave the west after exchange agreements expired and were not renewed by China.

The only U.S. zoo with pandas is in Atlanta and its agreement expires next year.

Washington’s National Zoo sent its three pandas — Mei Xiang, Tian Tian, and their cub, Xiao Qi Ji — to China in early November. The black and white bears at the San Diego Zoo were sent home in 2019 and the remaining panda at the Memphis, Tennessee, zoo returned earlier this year.

Veteran China-watchers have speculated that the People’s Republic is gradually pulling its bears from American and European zoos due to tensions with western governments over a host of issues.

However, Chinese President Xi Jinping said during his recent trip to the U.S. that his government was “ready to continue” lending bears to American zoos, giving hope to U.S. panda fans that they haven’t seen the last of them.



PANDA PARTING. Tian Tian eats her “panda cake” in her enclosure at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland in this December 25, 2011 file photo. The zoo’s giant pandas were treated to an extra helping of panda cake on Christmas morning in celebration of their first Christmas 12 years ago in Scotland. Visitors to the Edinburgh Zoo last month had their final chance to see and bid farewell to the popular giant pandas, whose exchange agreements have expired. (AP Photo/Andrew Milligan/PA/File)

The pair in Scotland are the only pandas in the U.K. After unsuccessful breeding attempts — natural and artificial — the zoo said it has no plans to bring in others because a global biodiversity crisis requires it to work on protecting more endangered animals.

“With more than a million species at risk of extinction and our natural world in crisis, Yang Guang and Tian Tian have had an incredible impact by inspiring millions of people to care about nature,” said David Field, chief executive of the Royal Zoological

Society of Scotland. “That added interest in the pandas’ departure this year has allowed us to connect many more people with the conservation causes (we are) actively involved with, and with nature more generally.”

The pandas were loaned to the zoo in 2011 under a 10-year agreement that the China Wildlife Conservation Association extended for two more years.

The panda exhibit was closed to the public in late November to allow staff to begin preparing the bears for their return.

A Sumatran rhino calf born in Indonesia adds to the critically endangered species

By Edna Tarigan
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A critically endangered Sumatran rhino has been born in Indonesia’s western island of Sumatra, the second Sumatran rhino born in the country this year and a welcome addition to a species that currently numbers fewer than 50 animals.

A female named Delilah gave birth to a 55-pound male calf at a sanctuary for Sumatran rhinos in Way Kambas National Park in Lampung province, at the southern tip of Sumatra island.

The calf was fathered by a male named Harapan, who was born at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2006. He was the last Sumatran

rhino in the world to be repatriated to Indonesia, meaning that the entire population of Sumatran rhinos is now in Indonesia.

Most of the remaining rhinos live on Sumatra, several in captivity. They are threatened by destruction of tropical forest habitat and poachers who kill the animals for their horns, which are prized for making ornaments and for use in traditional medicine in China and other parts of Asia.

“This birth is also the birth of the second Sumatran rhino in 2023. It emphasizes the Indonesian government’s commitment to rhino conservation efforts in Indonesia, especially the Sumatran rhino,” Indonesian Environment and Forestry minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar said in a written statement.

She added that, from the semi-natural breeding efforts, there have been five live births of Sumatran rhinos at the Way Kambas sanctuary.

A conservation guard found Delilah with the newborn male calf next to her 10 days earlier than the estimated date of delivery.

Delilah and her baby are in good condition as the calf is now able to stand upright and walk. Not long after he was discovered, he was able to nurse in a standing position, according to a statement from Indonesia’s Environment and Forestry Ministry.

The Sumatran rhino is legally protected in Indonesia. The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Threatened Species describes the Sumatran rhinos as critically endangered: the population is declining and only about 30 mature animals remain.

The yet-to-be-named calf is the first successful delivery from Delilah.

Delilah, a 7-year-old female, was born in an Indonesian sanctuary in 2016.

She was the second calf born to her mother, Ratu, who also gave birth to a male named Andatu in 2012, the first

rhino birth in captivity in Indonesia in 124 years. The father, Andalas, was born at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2001.

In September, Ratu, a 23-year-old female rhino, gave birth to a female rhino at the sanctuary in Lampung. Sumatran rhinos typically have a life expectancy of 35 to 40 years, according to the WWF conservation group.

□

Millions of Indians set a world record celebrating Diwali

Continued from page 2

in the past.

The Diwali celebrations this year were marked as authorities prepared to inaugurate in January an under-construction and long-awaited temple of the Hindu god Ram at the site of a demolished 16th-century Babri mosque in Ayodhya city in Uttar Pradesh state.

The Babri Masjid mosque was destroyed by a Hindu mob with pickaxes and crowbars in December 1992, sparking massive Hindu-Muslim violence that left some 2,000 people dead, most of them Muslims. The Supreme Court’s verdict in 2019 allowed a temple to be built in place of the demolished mosque.



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Coal power, traffic, waste are burning a toxic smog cocktail in Indonesia’s Jakarta

By Edna Tarigan and Fadlan Syam
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Against the backdrop of smokestacks from a nearby coal power plant, the sky above Edy Suryana’s village stays grey for months at a time, while ashes and the stench of smoke hang in the air.

Suryana has spent more than three decades living in the shadow of the power plant in northern Java, just 60 miles from Jakarta, Indonesia’s most populous city. She and other villagers have watched as their loved ones suffered from coughing fits, itchy skin, and other health problems that many believe are partly because of the ever-present smog.

Pollution is causing a rise in respiratory illnesses and deaths in northern Java, including Jakarta, experts say. Smog in the metropolis of 11.2 million people comes from a combination of the coal-fired plants, vehicle and motorcycle exhaust, trash burning, and industries, and many in the city are demanding that the government take action.

Emissions from coal-fired power plants contribute to greenhouse gasses that rise into the atmosphere and help heat the planet, a key focus of the United Nations climate conference, or COP28, held in Dubai.

Countries like Indonesia are struggling to balance rising demand to power industrialization with the need to cut carbon emissions and protect public health.

In 2010, Suryana watched as his sister-in-law died from lung problems. In 2019, the dirty air seemed to worsen his daughter’s bout of tuberculosis.

“We’ve clearly suffered an impact,” he told The Associated Press.

Data gathered by IQAir, a Swiss air technology company, regularly ranks Jakarta as one of the most polluted cities in the world. Blue skies are a rare sight and the air often smells like petrol or heavy smoke. Normally healthy residents complain of itchy eyes and sore throats on days when air pollution soars past levels



considered safe by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Indonesian government.

Air pollution potentially contributed to more than 10,000 deaths and 5,000 hospitalizations in Jakarta in 2019, according to research conducted by Vital Strategies, a global public health nongovernmental organization that is headquartered in New York.

Pollution levels get and stay so high that it’s not safe for people to do outdoor activities without risking short- and long-term damage to their health, said Ginanjar Syuhada, a health analyst at Vital Strategies.

But not everyone is able to stay inside. Misnar, a street vendor who spends his days working outdoors — and like many Indonesians only uses one name — went to the hospital in September and spent days in a special air chamber to treat his pneumonia, which was worsened by routinely working outdoors in the polluted air, said Misnar’s eldest daughter, Siti Nurzanah.

His doctor recommended that Misnar stay home after he left the hospital. But he makes his living selling items on the street. So his only option is to rely on face masks to help filter the dirty air he breathes.

“I want my father to stay at home. My father is old, 63, the air is bad with his

health condition,” Nurzanah said.

Acute respiratory infections and pneumonia cases have been increasing, according to a spokesperson from Indonesia’s Ministry of Health, which has recognized that Jakarta’s air pollution has exceeded WHO safe limits.

Data from the Jakarta Health Agency show that the number of residents treated for pneumonia from January to August was more than double the same period the year before, at 9,192 cases.

The number of patients visiting Jakarta’s Persahabatan Hospital, a national respiratory referral hospital, with acute respiratory infections and pneumonia from January to August likewise doubled.

The heavy smog takes a toll on the economy. “If we calculate it in terms of economic value, it could potentially cause economic losses, from a health perspective, of around 40 trillion rupiah (more than \$25.2 billion) a year,” said Syuhada, the health analyst.

“It’s working age people who suffer symptoms of prolonged coughs and colds,” Feni Fitriani Taufik, a pulmonologist at Persahabatan Hospital told The Associated Press. “They used to have it for only three to five days. Now, after two or three weeks the cough still lingers.”

ACRID AIR. An activist wearing a face mask to represent those affected by air pollution shows an image on her phone in Jakarta, Indonesia, in this September 16, 2021 file photo. Pollution is causing a rise in respiratory illnesses and deaths in northern Java, including Jakarta, experts say. Smog in the metropolis of 11.2 million people comes from a combination of the coal-fired plants, vehicle and motorcycle exhaust, trash burning, and industries, and many in the city are demanding that the government take action. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara/File)

Solving the pollution issue is complicated.

Emissions from burning coal, which is highly polluting but relatively cheap, contribute up to a third of Indonesia’s air pollution according to Siti Nurbaya, Indonesia’s Environmental and Forestry minister. The country has pledged to cut emissions in coming decades, but it still provides most of Indonesia’s energy needs.

Millions of vehicles and motorcycles spew emissions as workers commute to and within the city. The Indonesian government has called on residents to use public transportation and has given regulation and financial incentives to residents who want to shift from using gas or diesel-fuelled vehicles to electric vehicles.

Public transport remains limited and electric vehicle uptake has been slow: Transportation minister Budi Karya Sumadi at a national seminar in September said that there were 26,100 electric vehicles and 79,700 electric motorbikes currently operating in Indonesia in 2022 — less than one percent of the more than 17.2 million registered cars and 125.2 million motorbikes in Indonesia.

The government is pushing to have more than 530,000 electric vehicles on the road in Indonesia by 2030.

To make a real dent in the pollution, the government also needs to tighten regulations for emissions from factories and industries in and near Jakarta, according to research from Vital Strategies.

“They should. Because industry is contributing 30% to 40% of the air pollution in Jakarta, in addition to emissions from transportation,” Syuhada said.



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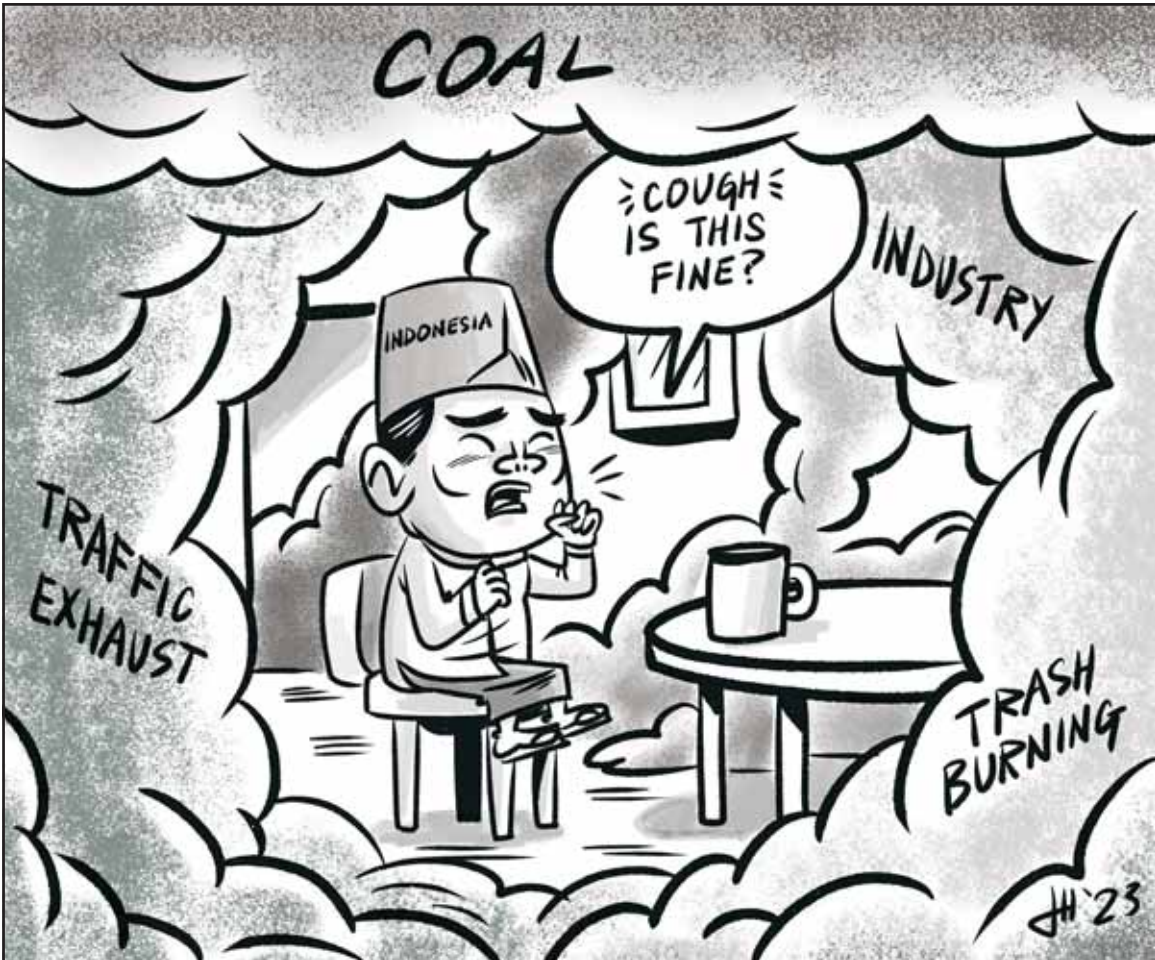
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■ Dmae Lo Roberts



Youth files project

My artistic projects have always been a personal response to the world around me. During the pandemic, a longtime friend went through a tragic loss when her grandchild passed away. She didn't talk about it much, but I surmised it may have been because of the stress and isolation many young people underwent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as previous generations experienced war trauma and economic depression, the last few years will forever leave an indelible mark on our youth. What they went through created lasting mental health challenges. Suicide and depression rates are still rising, especially among BIPOC youth.

Through a nonprofit I run, MediaRites, we started The -Ism Youth Files project to highlight the mental health of BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities. We issued a call for submissions for a new book collection as well as a docuseries podcast. Of the 40 submissions received, we selected 20 youth writers. They hailed from Oregon and Washington, as well as Indiana, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Connecticut in the U.S. There was also a selection from Kolkata, India. Each writer received an honorarium payment.

During the two-year project, I got to know and respect the contributors. It became a mentorship project as we worked with the writers to polish their work. For the docuseries podcast, I interviewed each writer about the motivations behind their submissions and the effects of the pandemic. Their honesty and lived experiences moved me and the project became a complex and credible depiction of today's youth.

I heard stories about anxiety, depression, fear, and worry about the future. They shared devastating, yet ultimately hopeful stories of recovery from eating disorders, suicidal ideation, and assault. They talked about the cultural barriers within their families that prevented them from getting immediate help. In fact, the majority of the teens said their friends or siblings knew they were in trouble before their parents did.

The goals of The -Ism Youth Files were to create more awareness about youth mental health and to break the silence that still exists in communities of color. I continue to stay in touch with and have grown close to many of the youth. I have written

letters of support for college admissions and passed along information about other writing opportunities.

The title for the book and podcast, *Speaking Our Truths*, was inspired by one of the personal essays. It was titled "How We Speak Our Truth." Over and over, the young people referred to speaking their truths. After what they went through, honesty and transparency were high priorities for them.

We worked with professionals in mental health, book editing, and publishing. I'm very proud of the book because it has personal stories of overcoming trauma, including helpful strategies the youth learned. It has beautiful artwork and brief graphic novels, as well as fine writing. Alongside the personal stories in both the book and docuseries are mental health tips and solutions. The podcast series was hosted by Asian

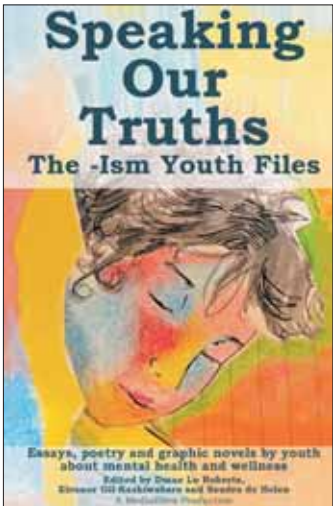
American youth and featured many interviews. I'm pleased the docuseries is starting to be picked up by public radio stations across the country.

Through the project, we created a lasting document of what young people went through during the pandemic — going back to school, reflections on what the experience meant to them, and what they learned. I wanted the collection of personal essays, poetry, and graphic novels to be a chronicle about life during and after the pandemic, perhaps encouraging more awareness for a taboo subject — especially for the BIPOC communities — and spotlighting the lack of resources for mental health help for youth with disabilities.

One thing rang clear: all of our young writers affirmed that they turned to writing and artistic creativity as a form of comfort and healing, and as a way to gain a more optimistic window toward their futures.

I'm currently in talks with a suicide-prevention coalition through Multnomah County and I hope to create a new season of the *Speaking Our Truths* docuseries podcast. It would focus on peer-to-peer training for teens so they know how to help their friends and peers who are going through a crisis and need access to professional help.

The *Speaking Our Truths* book is available for purchase at <www.mediarites.org>, where a free mental health toolkit is also available for download. Proceeds help support a new season of the podcast.



MY TURN

■ Wayne Chan



Panda-monium or Panda-ocalypse, we're at the brink

Tian Tian, Mei Xiang, and their cub Xiao Qi Ji have moved to China.

If you haven't already heard, the three pandas were residents of the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, D.C. until November 8. The departure of the pandas ended 50 years of showcasing the popular pandas at the east coast zoo.

The loaning of pandas is part of a program that has allowed them to delight audiences around the world.

It has been part of a diplomatic and cultural exchange between the U.S. and China, often referred to as "Panda Diplomacy," that started in the 1970s during the Nixon administration.

The question I have is now that nearly all of the pandas have been transported back to China, particularly when relations between the U.S. and China have been somewhat rocky for the past few years, what should we call the program — "Panda Discord?"

If this is China's way of somehow punishing or disrespecting the U.S., my concern is that the return of the pandas to China is the start of a slippery slope. What if this panda incident leads to some sort of cultural retaliation from the U.S.?

I mean, there's a lot to choose from. Much of U.S. pop culture is wildly popular in China. Taylor Swift has more than 100 music videos and hundreds of pages of live performances uploaded to YouKou, China's version of YouTube.

During my last trip to Shanghai, while walking along the famous Bund, I stopped at a local Häagen-Dazs for a scoop of ice cream, which is promoted in various Chinese ads by actor Bradley Cooper. The NBA is a major fan favorite throughout China.

What happens if Taylor suddenly closes up shop in China? How will the China populace get their fill of songs

describing her latest romantic adventures? What if Häagen-Dazs stops selling ice cream? No more scoops of butter pecan? Will China be able to survive only on condensed milk over shaved ice?



And what would we do with Disneyland in Shanghai? Would we move it all back and set up shop in Little Rock, Arkansas? If we really have to do it, maybe we can compromise — we'll take back Pirates of the Caribbean and Buzz Lightyear Planet Rescue, but in return, we'll ship out "It's a Small World" as a replacement. How's that for diplomacy?

Then what would China do in retaliation? If China's up in arms about

having "It's a Small World" foisted upon them, will they start getting serious?

No more iPhones or iPads. Both of those are made in China. You wouldn't be reading this column because right this moment I'd have to rush out and buy a PC if I was going to meet my deadline.

No, no ... it's just not worth it. China needs their ice cream and the Pirates of the Caribbean and we need our iPhones and iPads. It turns out that the Smithsonian's National Zoo is renovating their panda exhibit in the hopes China will send a new pair of pandas in the future. Let's hope that Panda Diplomacy is alive and well, especially since China's President Xi last month visited President Biden.

Here's a thought. If we really want to engage in Panda Diplomacy, we can do a trade. For every panda China sends to the U.S., we'll open up one Panda Express in China! A panda for a panda!

Hmm ... as a backup, the holiday season is upon us. Maybe there'll be a sale on PCs.

Humor writer Wayne Chan lives in the San Diego area; cartoonist Wayne Chan is based in the Bay Area.



HELPING THE HUNGRY. Driver Carlos Quezada loads rice on a pallet for distribution at Feeding Westchester in Elmsford, New York. A growing number of states are working to keep food out of landfills over concerns that it is taking up too much space and posing environmental problems. Globally, about a third of food is wasted. In the United States, it's even higher, at 40%, according to the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

Tackling climate change and alleviating hunger: States recycle and donate food headed to landfills

By David R. Martin and Michael Casey
The Associated Press

ELMSFORD, N.Y. — When Sean Rafferty got his start in the grocery business, anything that wasn't sold got tossed out.

But on a recent day, Rafferty, the store manager for ShopRite of Elmsford-Greenburgh in New York, was preparing boxes of bread, donuts, fresh produce, and dairy products to be picked up by a food bank. It's part of a statewide program requiring larger businesses to donate edible food and, if they can, recycle remaining food scraps.

"Years ago, everything went in the garbage ... to the landfills, the compactors, or wherever it was," said Rafferty, who has 40 years in the industry. "Now, over the years, so many programs have developed where we're able to donate all this food ... where we're helping people with food insecurities."

New York is among a growing number of states targeting food waste over concerns it is taking up diminishing landfill space and contributing to global warming as

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Largest Hindu temple outside India in the modern era opens in New Jersey

By Luis Andres Henao
and Deepa Bharath
The Associated Press

ROBBINSVILLE, N.J. — If stones could talk, sing, and tell stories, Yogi Trivedi believes the marble and limestone that adorn the spires, pillars, and archways of the stunning Hindu temple in central New Jersey would compose a paean to the divine.

The tales these stones tell are those of seva (selfless service) and bhakti (devotion), which form the core of the Swaminarayan sect, a branch of Hinduism, said Trivedi, a scholar of Hinduism at Columbia University.

It took a combined total of about 4.7 million hours of work by artisans and volunteers to hand-carve about 2 million cubic feet of stone. The four varieties of marble from Italy and limestone from Bulgaria travelled first to India and then more than 8,000 miles across the world to New Jersey.

They were then fitted together like a giant jigsaw to create what is now touted as the largest Hindu temple outside India to be built in the modern era, standing on a 126-acre tract. It opened to the public in October.

The largest temple complex in the world is the Angkor Wat, originally constructed in the 12th century in Krong Siem Reap, Cambodia, and dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu by King Suryavarman II. It is now described as a Hindu-Buddhist temple, and is one of 1,199 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The Robbinsville temple is one of many built by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, or BAPS, a worldwide religious and civic organization within the Swaminarayan sect.

“Service and devotion are the two basic elements that form the subtle foundation of how a temple so majestic gets built here in central New Jersey,” said Trivedi, who studies the Swaminarayan faith tradition and follows it.

This temple will be the third Akshardham, or “abode of the divine,” the



AP Photo/Luis Andres Henao



AP Photo/Ted Shaffrey

INTRICATE ARCHITECTURE. A woman (top photo) admires the intricate architecture of the BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham (bottom photo), the largest Hindu temple outside India in the modern era, in Robbinsville, New Jersey. The temple was partly built using marble from Italy and limestone from Bulgaria hand-carved by artisans in India and shipped to New Jersey.

an ancient system of social hierarchy based on one’s birth that is tied to concepts of purity and social status.

The case continues to raise questions among activists fighting caste discrimination and those advocating for workers’ rights, about the blurred lines between uncompensated work and the concept of selfless service, which followers of the faith say constitutes their core belief.

Trivedi said these allegations weighed heavily on community members because their faith has always taught them “to see the divine in all and love and serve them as manifestations of the divine.” He said Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the sect’s fifth spiritual successor, who envisioned such a temple campus in the United States, was a progressive guru who cared deeply about social equality.

“Caste and class do not divide us,” Trivedi said.

The temple project brought forth volunteerism and service, which like the sculptor’s chisel, chip away people’s egos and prime them to learn, he said.

“In that learning, one becomes a better person within and that is the end goal of seva,” Trivedi said. “It’s not just to give to the community or build these (ornate structures), but to better oneself.”

He said the temple would not have been possible without the service of thousands of volunteers, many of whom took time off school and work to serve in different capacities. This might be the first Hindu temple where women were involved in the actual temple construction under the artisans’ supervision, he added.

Families from across the country travelled to the temple campus in October to get a sneak peek. Devotees bowed to each other and to monks in saffron robes. As the sun set, two men in white robes

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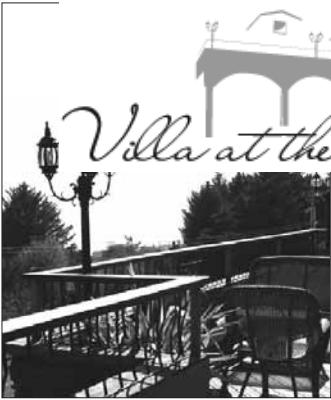
organization has built after two others in New Delhi and Gujarat, where BAPS is headquartered. The former is the largest Hindu temple complex in the world. The sect, which will celebrate its 50th year in North America next year, oversees more than 1,200 temples and 3,850 centers around the world.

The New Jersey Akshardham, which has been in the works for about 12 years, came under scrutiny and criticism after a

2021 civil lawsuit alleging forced labor, meager wages, and grim working conditions.

Twelve of the 19 plaintiffs have now retracted their allegations and the lawsuit is on hold pending an investigation “with which BAPS continues to cooperate fully,” Trivedi said.

The complaint alleges that those exploited were Dalits or members of the former untouchable caste in India. Caste is



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How a massive all-granite, hand-carved Hindu temple ended up on Hawai‘i’s lush Kauai Island

By Deepa Bharath
The Associated Press

KAPAA, Hawai‘i — It is the only all-granite, hand-carved Hindu temple in the west built without power tools or electricity, and it’s nestled on one of the smaller islands in Hawai‘i surrounded by lush gardens and forests.

On the island of Kauai, the presence of the Iraivan Temple — a white granite edifice with gold-leafed domes, modelled after millennia-old temples in South India — is unexpected and stunning. Less than 1% of Hawai‘i’s 1.4 million residents are Hindus and on Kauai, the number of Hindus may not even exceed 50, according to some estimates.

But that hasn’t deterred the two dozen monks living at the Kauai Aadheenam campus from being good neighbors and stewards of their faith tradition, drawing pilgrims and seekers from around the globe. In this all-male temple-monastery complex, the monks study and practice Shaivism, a major tradition within Hinduism, which holds Lord Shiva as the supreme being.

One of the order’s monks, who has spent decades supervising the temple’s construction and tending to its gardens, is Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami, who came to the Kauai community of Kapaa in 1968 with his teacher and the center’s founder, the late Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami. He says the Iraivan Temple was inspired by the founder’s mystical vision of Lord Shiva seated on a large boulder on these grounds. Its construction began in 1990 and continued after the founder’s death in 2001. The word



“Iraivan” means “he who is worshipped” in Tamil, a language spoken about 8,000 miles away in southern India.

The monks created an entire village in India for the artisans who hand-built the temple over the last 33 years, said Palaniswami.

“Our guru believed that electricity brings a magnetic force field and a psychic impact,” he said. “It’s like when the power goes out during a storm, something different happens when there is no electricity. There is a certain quiet, a calmness.”

Illuminated only by oil lamps, Iraivan has no fans or air-conditioning. Its architectural style is from the Chola Dynasty, which ruled parts of what is now South India and Sri Lanka for about 1,500 years, starting in 300 B.C.E.

The main deity is the 700-pound quartz

crystal shivalingam, an abstract representation of Shiva. The campus also houses Kadavul Temple dedicated to Shiva in the cosmic dancer form, or Nataraja.

Priest Pravinkumar Vasudeva arrived in March, when the temple — 3,600 stones, pillars, and beams made with roughly 3.2 million pounds of granite — was consecrated. He is still amazed it stands on this tiny island.

“In India, you could possibly build something like this, but it hasn’t been done,” he said. “Here, it is nearly impossible, but it has been done.”

The order’s origin story began in 1948 with founder Subramuniaswami, a former San Francisco ballet dancer who sought out a spiritual teacher. In northern Sri Lanka, Guru Yogaswami initiated him into Shaivism and instructed him to build

UNIQUE TEMPLE. The sun shines down on the golden spires of the Iraivan Temple at the Kauai Hindu Monastery in Kapaa, Hawai‘i. The temple is made entirely of hand-carved granite, which the monks have been constructing for the last 33 years. It was completed in March and marked with a special opening ceremony the same month. (AP Photo/Jessie Wardarski, File)

“a bridge between the east and west,” said Palaniswami, the garden-tending monk.

Based in San Francisco in 1969, the founder “felt the sacred pull” of the Kauai property while on a retreat there, the monk said. It was a rundown Tropical Inn resort at the time.

To Native Hawaiians, the plot of land was known as Pihanakalani, or “the fullness of heaven.” Cognizant of that connection, Subramuniaswami wanted to make sure the new temple aligned with Native Hawaiian spirits.

So 35 years ago, he reached out to Lynn Muramoto, a local Buddhist leader who had navigated a similar situation. She is the president of the Lawai International Center on Kauai, which is home to 88 Shingon Buddhist shrines on an ancient sacred site where Hawaiians once came for healing.

She visited the temple site with the late Abraham Kawai‘i, a revered Hawaiian spiritual practitioner, or kahu, and witnessed the “deeply moving” moment when Kawai‘i called the location “perfect.”

Sabra Kauka, a Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner on Kauai, said she was “a little aghast” in the beginning, but then consulted Aunty Momi Mo‘okini Lum, her calabash aunt who is descended from Moikeha, the chief from Tahiti who

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How a massive all-granite, hand-carved Hindu temple ended up on Hawai‘i’s lush Kauai Island

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built Pihanakalani some 1,000 years ago. Lum told her the monks had the means to take care of the land in perpetuity. “And so I laid down my concerns,” she said. Kauka praised the monks’ landscaping, from plant choices to controlling invasive species.

“The very fact that we have people on this island who care for our historic places, realize the value of them, and are taking care of them in an exquisite way is remarkable,” Kauka said.

Subramuniyaswami prioritized fostering connections across the island’s faith traditions. These relationships have stretched beyond Kauai, and continue today. Following the deadly Maui wildfires in August, Palaniswami said, the temple helped connect Hindu donors to local groups leading recovery efforts.

The monastery-temple complex, accessible via a public gate, also helps connect visitors to something greater. Devajyothi Kondapi from Portland, Oregon, has only heard stories about great saints and sages in ancient India who blessed and sanctified the land.

“Here, I feel their presence,” she said during a recent visit, a trip she makes a couple times a year. “What makes this a divine place is the monks’ discipline.”

The monks, who take vows of celibacy, nonviolence, and vegetarianism, are guided and inspired by the philosophy of Shaivism. They live in huts, and begin their day with 4:00am worship and meditation, followed by gardening, woodworking, cooking, and other tasks. They do not speak about their prior lives.

Beyond the temple itself, one of their most significant projects took eight years to complete. In the 1990s, the monks digitized agamas, or ancient Shaivite texts etched on palm leaves, Palaniswami said.

They preserved these fragile texts, or as Palaniswami calls them, a Shaivite “user manual of sorts,” and made the digitized version public. Now anyone can read Shaivite instructions on everything from running a temple and celebrating festivals to preparing meals and managing a family.

The Shaivite tradition is one that blends theism (belief in gods) and monism, the belief in one, supreme being, said Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, the order’s current leader. The end goal is to attain oneness with the supreme being.

“A beautiful, holy place has the catalytic power to help you find that sacredness within.”

Sannyasin Tillainathaswami, a monk who has lived



HAND-CARVED GRANITE. Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami, left in the left photo, talks with Acharya Kumarnathaswami, right, in the monk’s woodworking shop at the Kauai Hindu Monastery in Kapaa, Hawai‘i, in this July 10, 2023 file photo. In the right photo, a statue of Lord Muruga, the Hindu god of war, son of Shiva, and brother of Ganesha, sits in the middle of a meditation space under a banyan tree at the Kauai Hindu Monastery. (AP Photos/Jessie Wardarski, File)

here for more than a decade, said the ancient practice drew him in because it delves deep into the meaning of one’s existence.

“If you find the center of yourself, you’ve found that which is the center of everything,” he said.

Over the last 50 years, Palaniswami, who knows every sector of the 382-acre grounds, has carved out tranquil spaces conducive to meditation and reflection. The monk wears flowing saffron robes and a fluffy silver beard. His hair is gathered in a bun atop his head, adorned with a red hibiscus bloom. Streaks of sacred ash mark his forehead, accentuated with a vermilion dot in the middle.

On most days, Palaniswami, who also runs the order’s website and publications department, drives a golf cart along the winding pathways tending to the flora — plumeria, orchids, hibiscus, passion fruit, redwood, lotuses, and herbs.

Along with his guru, he planted 108 Rudraksha trees, which are native to Nepal and rarely seen in the west. The word “Rudraksha” in Sanskrit means “the tear of Shiva.” The trees bear cerulean fruit, and its seeds are used for prayer, meditation, and protection.

“Shiva was in heaven and looked down on the earth, and when he saw the plight of humans, it so moved him that he wept a tear that rolled off his cheek and fell to the earth,” Palaniswami said. “From that tear grew the first Rudraksha tree.”

The trees started as 3-inch seedlings about 45 years ago, and now tower over 100 feet with thick roots. The monks pressure-wash the seeds, stringing them into meditation malas, worn as a reminder of Shiva’s compassion, said



Palaniswami, who plans to build a public meditation room.

For Veylanswami, the order’s leader, his favorite campus meditation spot is where a gentle waterfall meets the gushing Wailua River, which is sacred to some Native Hawaiians.

There, he says, he feels a transformative power, especially when he chants Shiva’s name.

Associated Press journalist Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu contributed to this report. Associated Press religion coverage receives support through The AP’s collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for content.



SEVA & BHAKTI. A man sits at the BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham inside the garland-like path, or parikrama, which serves as an ornate covered walkway to the largest Hindu temple outside India in the modern era, in Robbinsville, New Jersey. The temple was built by BAPS, a worldwide religious and civic organization within the Swaminarayan sect of Hinduism. (AP Photo/Luis Andres Henao)

Largest Hindu temple outside India in the modern era opens in New Jersey

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performed a ceremony in front of the 49-foot-tall statue of the Bhagwan Nilkanth Varni, who later became known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the founder of the sect who ushered in a moral and spiritual renaissance in western India.

Other worshippers prostrated on the floor pressing their foreheads to the ground in reverence. As night fell, Nikita Patel meditated and lit an incense stick before the deity.

“All religions, all communities are welcome here,” she said, “And here, they will feel the peace.”

Avani Patel visited from Atlanta with her husband and their two children, ages 11 and 15. She knelt inside the temple and marvelled at the ornate ceiling, her hands folded in prayer.

“It’s jaw dropping, mind blowing,” she said. “You can see divinity radiating

through it all.”

Patel said she and her husband, Pritesh, were among the volunteers who gave their time to create the complex, and she is proud to be a part of an organization that would build such a resource to pass on these values to posterity.

Trivedi said he does not view the temple “just as a Hindu place of worship.”


“It’s not even just Indian or Indian American,” he said, adding that the temple stands for universal values that can be found in every religious text and in the hearts and minds of great thinkers and leaders of every era.

“What we’ve tried to do is express these universal values in a way that relate to all visitors.”


Bharath reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press religion coverage receives support through The AP’s collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for content.

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In the U.S., Hmong “new year” recalls ancestral spirits while teaching traditions to new generations

By **Giovanna Dell’orto**
The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — For the annual fall renewal of her shaman spirit, Mee Vang Yang will soon ritually redecorate the tall altar in her living room where she keeps her father’s ring-shaped shaman bells.

She carried them across the Mekong River as the family fled the Communist takeover of her native Laos four decades ago. Today, they facilitate the connection to the spiritual world she needs to help fellow refugees and their American-raised children who seek restoration of lost spirits.

“Like going to church, you’re giving beyond yourself to a greater power,” said the mother of six through a translator in Hmong.

It’s the language spoken for the most important spiritual celebration in the Hmong calendar, the “Noj Peb Caug” — translated as “new year,” but literally meaning “eat 30,” since the ceremonies traditionally were tied to the fall’s post-harvest abundance shared with the clan and offered to spirits.

During new year, which is celebrated mostly in November and December among Hmong Americans, shamans send off their spirit guides to regenerate their energy for another season of healing. Male heads of households who embrace traditional animist practices perform soul-calling ceremonies, venerate ancestor spirits, and invoke the protection of good spirits.

“A traditional Hmong home is not just a home, but also a place of worship,” said Tzianeng Vang, Vang Yang’s nephew, who



came to Minnesota as a teen and grew up a Christian. He’s among the community leaders trying to divulge knowledge of these animist traditions so they won’t be lost for his children’s generation.

“You preserve it here or you have nowhere,” he said.

Persecuted as an ethnic minority in their ancestral lands in China, the Hmong fled first to the mountains of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. There, tens of thousands fought for the United States in the Vietnam War. When Communist regimes swept the region, they escaped to refugee camps in neighboring Thailand and, starting in the mid-1970s, resettled largely in California farm country and Minnesota’s capital city.

The majority of the approximately 300,000 Hmong in the United States are animists and believe that spirits live

throughout the physical world. That includes multiple souls in a person — any of which can leave and needs to be ceremonially called back, said Lee Pao Xiong, director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University in St. Paul.

But many younger Hmong haven’t learned the spiritual significance of cultural traditions, even popular ones like the Thanksgiving weekend dance, music and craft performances in one of St. Paul’s largest entertainment venues, Xiong said.

“It’s intricate, it’s not just ‘go to church and pray.’ There are all these spirits to atone to. It’s about spirits that you have to appease,” said Xiong, who teaches classes about these traditions, which often include the ritual slaughter of cows, pigs, or chickens as an offering or an exchange of

NOJ PEB CAUG. Mee Vang Yang holds her father’s ring-shaped shaman bells in front of the altar in her living room in St. Paul, Minnesota. Vang Yang carried them across the Mekong River as the family fled the Communist takeover of her native Laos four decades ago. Today, they facilitate the connection to the spiritual world she needs to help fellow refugees and their American-raised children who seek restoration of lost spirits. (AP Photo/Giovanna Dell’orto)

On a farm north of St. Paul, Moua Yang runs the hog butcher shop he started working on with his father when he was a child. Community members can perform rituals on site before the animals are killed.

“To me, it’s a service to the community. Because they feel it’s for their wellbeing,” said Yang, who is Christian but employs up to 20 workers on weekends to field the dozens of requests for different Hmong ceremonies.

On a recent fall afternoon, Sai Vue took his three boys, ages 6, 4, and 3, to choose a pig there and have it slaughtered to pay back his ancestors for answering his request for help — though most of the nearly 200 pounds of pork will also feed the family for two months.

Meat is especially important for new year dishes, since it was considered a rare delicacy and thus propitious for wealth in the agricultural Hmong society.

“It’s ingrained in me,” said Vue, who was born in St. Paul. But he wants his boys to be comfortable with the spiritual customs, “so when they grow up it’s not a big surprise.”

That same day, the Hmong Village indoor market on the outskirts of St. Paul was bustling with families scouring the

Continued on page 12

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In the U.S., Hmong “new year” recalls ancestral spirits while teaching traditions to new generations

Continued from page 11

stalls for embroidered clothing, headwear, and jewelry pieces for the new year among the fragrances of herbs and tropical fruits imported from Southeast Asia and California.

As she bought pearl strings for dressmaking to take to her grandmother in their small Wisconsin town, Janessa Moua said she’s been studying Hmong since she enrolled at a Twin Cities university.

“I’m learning again what things in the house mean,” she said.

At a nearby stall full of pleated black-and-pink skirts and vests strung with silver ornaments, Thormee Moua beamed at her son, a freshman lugging bags bulging with new clothes for new year festivities at his school.

“I’m so happy they can be Hmong,” Moua said.

Educating youth in ancestral culture is a crucial aim of the Hmong Cultural Center just down the street from St. Paul’s capitol, said its director, Txongpao Lee.

“They need to learn from parents and prepare for when they have children,” said Lee, who estimates about one third of young Hmong have converted to Christianity. Acceptance of ancestral customs differs among church denominations, he added — his family’s Lutheran and Catholic members vary in participation in new year rituals.

Lee leads them for his household, though his wife, Hlee Xiong Lee, has been a shaman since she fell ill when pregnant with the fourth of her seven children. Shamans, like other traditional healers across cultures, often associate the



AP Photo/Giovanna Dell’Oro



AP Photo/Mark Vanleave

revelation of their gift with life-threatening sickness, and believe they could die if they refuse the call.

Xiong Lee’s path to shamanism has been arduous, entailing rigorous training with a shaman mentor to learn how to communicate with the spirit world. But so was her journey to the United States, arriving in a small Minnesota town as a 14-year-old refugee with no English-speaking skills, too embarrassed to ask for help getting a

TEACHING TRADITION. Chad Lee, top photo, explains his role as a Hmong shaman in front of the altars in his house in St. Paul, Minnesota. In the bottom photo, Sai Vue, right, and his three sons wait to choose a pig and have it slaughtered at Hogmasters butcher shop in Hugo, Minnesota. The pig is an offering to pay back Vue’s ancestors for answering his request for help, and he brought his boys with him so they would be more familiar with traditional Hmong spiritual customs that often involve sacrificing animals.

lunch ticket on her first day of school.

She’s proud of how her own children wear string bracelets and effortlessly explain to inquisitive teachers or classmates they’re meant to tie the family to protecting spirits.

“They’re good at adapting to my tradition and American tradition,” she said.

Kevin Lee, a shaman’s son who says he also first started experiencing spiritual energies when he was 5 years old, similarly has had to navigate a regular childhood in St. Paul with his ability to connect with good and bad spirits “on the other side.”


“Kids would be like, ‘this guy is weird.’ For me, it was just another day,” he said in front of the three living-room altars in the house he shares with his parents and brother.

They will be redecorated with new paper designs for the new year after his father, Chad Lee, finishes helping his shaman mentees and has time to send off his shaman spirit for a much-deserved break — short, though, because up to half a dozen people call for his help each day. Last year, his “angel” only got three days off, the older Lee said.

The “spiritual world is confusing, but once you find a path, everything is natural,” Chad Lee said.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through The AP’s collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for content.

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Godzilla film director pursuing Japanese spirituality of 1954 original

Continued from page 20

And so its arrival puts everything back into negative, or minus, territory.

Ryunosuke Kamiki portrays the hero, a soldier who survives the war and loses his family, only to end up confronting Godzilla.

The monster’s finely detailed depiction is the work of the Tokyo-based Shirogumi digital special-effects team, which includes Yamazaki. A frightfully realistic-appearing Godzilla crashes into fleeing screaming crowds, its giant tail sweeping buildings in a flash, its bumpy skin glowing like irradiated embers, its growl getting right up into your face.

Some Godzilla aficionados feel Hollywood has at times incorrectly portrayed “Gojira,” as it is known in Japan, like an inevitably fatalistic natural disaster, when the nuclear angle is key.

Yamazaki, a friendly man with quick laughs, stressed he loves the special effects of Hollywood films, adding that he is a big fan of Gareth Edwards’ 2014 Godzilla film.

That helped inspire the last Japanese



Godzilla, the 2016 *Shin Godzilla*, directed by Hideaki Anno and Shinji Higuchi. Toho studios hadn’t made a Godzilla film since 2004.

Yamazaki, who has worked with famed

auteur Juzo Itami, has won Japan’s equivalent of an Oscar for *Always — Sunset on Third Street*, a heartwarming family drama set in the 1950s, and *The Eternal Zero*, about Japanese fighter

JAPANESE SPIRITUALITY. Pictured in Tokyo are Godzilla Minus One director Takashi Yamazaki, left, and actor Ryunosuke Kamiki. In the 1954 classic film, directed by Ishiro Honda, a man sweated inside a rubber suit and trampled over cityscape miniatures to tell the story of a prehistoric creature mistakenly brought to life by radiation from nuclear testing in the Pacific. The monster in Godzilla Minus One is all computer graphics. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

pilots. He is ready to make another Godzilla movie. But what he really wants to make is a *Star Wars* film.

What got him interested in filmmaking as a child was Steven Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. He was so enthralled with the film he couldn’t stop talking about it, he recalled, following his mother around for hours, even as she was cooking dinner.

Star Wars, the franchise created by George Lucas and another science-fiction favorite, evokes so many Asian themes that make him the perfect director for a sequel, Yamazaki said.

“I am confident I can create a very special and unique *Star Wars*,” he said.

Tackling climate change and alleviating hunger: States recycle and donate food headed to landfills

Continued from page 7

meat, vegetables, and dairy release the greenhouse gas methane after being dumped in a landfill. Rescuing unwanted fruits and vegetables, eggs, cereals, and other food also helps to feed hungry families.

Globally, about a third of food is wasted. In the United States, it’s even higher, at 40%, according to the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. The U.S. spends about \$218 billion each year growing and producing food that is wasted. About 63 million tons (57 million metric tons) goes to waste, including 52.4 million tons (47.5 million metric tons) that ends up in landfills and 10 million tons (9 million metric tons) never harvested from farms.

“What’s shocking to people often is not only how much we waste ... but also the impact,” said Emily Broad Leib, a Harvard University law professor and director of the school’s Food Law and Policy Clinic. “Food waste causes about 8% to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.”

Broad Leib says 20% of water in the U.S. is used to grow food “that we then just throw away, so we’re basically taking water and putting it directly into a landfill.”

But she and others also note there is growing awareness of the need to do something about food waste in the U.S.

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency announced a goal of 50% food waste reduction by 2030.

That has prompted a number of state-led initiatives,

along with smaller, nonprofit efforts.

Ten states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation or executed policies to reduce, compost, or donate waste. All 50 states have passed legislation shielding donors and recovery organizations from criminal and civil liability linked to donated food.

California and Vermont have launched programs converting residents’ food waste into compost or energy, while Connecticut requires businesses, including larger food wholesalers and supermarkets, to recycle food waste. Farmers in Maryland can get a tax credit of up to \$5,000 per farm for food they donate.

Several states have joined New York in setting up systems allowing food to be donated. Rhode Island requires food vendors servicing education institutions to donate any unused food to food banks, while Massachusetts limits the amount of food that businesses can send to landfills, which Broad Leib said has increased food donations in the state by 22% over two years.

New York’s program is in its second year, and state officials believe it’s having a significant impact.

As of late October, the program had redistributed 5 million pounds (2.3 million kilograms) of food — the equivalent of 4 million meals — through Feeding New York State, which supports the state’s 10 regional food banks and is hoping to double that number next year. Among those required to donate food include colleges, prisons, amusement parks, and sporting venues.

“Certainly, we should be reducing the amount we waste to start with, but then we should be feeding people before we throw food away if it’s good, wholesome food,” said Sally Rowland, supervisor with the state Department of Environmental Conservation’s Organics, Reduction, and Recycling section. “To me, it’s a common sense kind of thing and I think it’s just kind of built that momentum of people understanding about how much food we’re really wasting.”

New York’s Westchester County has eight refrigerated

trucks that pick up all types of perishable food, according to Danielle Vasquez, food donations coordinator for Feeding Westchester, one of the state’s food banks.

The group started working with businesses in 2014 but has seen participation ramp up since the donation law went into effect last year. Much of the food collected goes to nearly 300 programs and partners throughout the county, including a mobile food pantry and the Carver Center, a nonprofit serving Port Chester’s families and children, which has a pantry.

“This time of year is very important for us and a lot of families across Westchester,” Vasquez said. “There is the high cost of food. There is a high cost of living. Westchester is a very expensive county to live in. ... We are here to supplement our families as much as we can so, that way, they can focus that money on paying their bills.”

Among those visiting the Carver Center last month was Betsy Quiroa, who lamented how the cost of everything had gone up since the coronavirus pandemic. She was counting on getting milk, eggs, fruits, and vegetables during her visit and said she didn’t care if the produce was dented or slightly damaged.

“Coming here is good,” said Quiroa, a mother of four who relies on Social Security. “If you are not working, you buy nothing. This is the problem.”

Despite New York’s success, advocates for food waste worry not enough is being done to meet the 2030 goal. Broad Leib and others have called for a national effort to coordinate the various state and local policies.

There is a goal, “but we don’t really have a great roadmap ... and how we’re going to actually achieve that end goal by 2030, which is kind of crazy,” Broad Leib said, adding that a one-person liaison office in the USDA isn’t sufficient to address the problem.

Kathryn Bender, a University of Delaware assistant professor of economics, said donation programs are helpful, but she worries they might shift the burden from businesses to nonprofits, which could struggle to distribute all the food.

“The best solution for food waste is to not have it in the first place,” Bender said. “If we don’t need to produce all that food, let’s not put all the resources into producing that food.”

Casey reported from Boston.

su | do | ku

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9		5	3		7	6		4
6			8		1			5
8	4						6	1
		7	9		5	4		
3	5						7	2
7			2		6			9
2		1	5		4	7		8

Difficulty level: Easy

#95376

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue’s puzzle

Puzzle #69371 (Hard)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

1	7	8	6	5	9	3	4	2
4	3	2	7	8	1	5	6	9
6	5	9	3	4	2	1	7	8
8	2	4	5	6	7	9	3	1
5	9	7	8	1	3	4	2	6
3	1	6	9	2	4	8	5	7
7	6	3	1	9	5	2	8	4
2	8	1	4	3	6	7	9	5
9	4	5	2	7	8	6	1	3

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In Mexico, a Japanese traditional dancer shows how body movement speaks beyond culture and religion

By **María Teresa Hernández Reyes**
The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — When music requires her to cry, Japanese traditional dancer Naoko Kihara barely alters her expression. It's her arms and torso that move like a slow-motion wave.

"Expression is minimal because we cry with our body," said Kihara, wrapped in her white and navy kimono, on a recent day at her dancing studio in Mexico, where an estimated 76,000 Japanese descendants live.

"It is the dance that is speaking, interpreting, since we do not smile, shout, or laugh."

Kihara won't reveal her age, but she's been practicing Japanese traditional dance for almost 24 years. Born in Brazil from Japanese parents who later moved to Mexico City, she carries on the legacy of Tamiko Kawabe, her mentor and pioneer of Hanayagi-style dance in the country.

For Latin American audiences, Kihara said, Japanese traditional dance might be hard to embrace.

Unlike the fast-moving interpreters of samba and salsa — widespread in Brazil and Mexico — Hanayagi dancers move quietly and gently, performing just a few moves that their bodies keep fully controlled.

"Is this yoga?" a spectator once asked Kihara, who responded: "No, it's an interpretation."

Some of her repertoires are almost sacred. Japanese dances as Hanayagi



EXPRESSIVE MOVEMENT. Aimi Kawasaki, a Japanese traditional Hanayagi-style dance student, practices in professor Naoko Kihara's studio in Mexico City. For traditional dancers, choreography is a sign of respect and no detail is minor. How a woman holds her fan speaks of her sense of elegance and honor. "You are not taught a dance, but a way of living," says Kawasaki. (AP Photo/Ginnette Riquelme)

and Kabuki have been historically performed to honor the emperor, considered a representative of god in the Shinto religion.

For traditional dancers, choreography is a sign of respect and no detail is minor. How a woman holds her fan speaks of her sense of elegance and honor.

"You are not taught a dance, but a way of living," said Aimi Kawasaki, a 21-year-old student of Kihara who will soon travel to Tokyo hoping to receive her dancing diploma.

Born in Mexico after her parents moved from Japan, Kawasaki says that Hanayagi is like ballet, but with an important exception: While Japanese traditional dancers are delicate and elegant, they never stand on the tip of their toes or pull

their bodies toward the sky.

"A Japanese dancer is rather crouched," Kawasaki said, her teacher demonstrating the posture: firm torso, bent knees, and feet close together, as if she were a flower rooted to the ground.

"It's to be humble," Kawasaki said, and because Japanese traditional dance maintains profound codes.

"We move our bodies close to the earth because we are part of nature," Kihara said. "It is a respect for the earth."

In the Japanese worldview, Kihara said, dance originated from earth, air, fire, and water. "That's our essence; it's our basis."

To keep this in mind, each Hanayagi dancer takes an oath when

Continued on page 19

K-pop star Rosé joins first lady Jill Biden to talk mental health

By **Colleen Long**
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — K-pop superstar Rosé said at a mental health awareness event hosted by first lady Jill Biden last month that it's important for the world to understand that famous people grapple with emotional struggles, too.

"I think that would be very great, for everybody who works under the public eye," she said, perched on a slate gray couch at the Apple Park campus in Cupertino after hugging the first lady, who thanked her for coming.

Rosé, a part of the supergroup BLACKPINK, said having a large social media following makes her feel vulnerable, particularly when people are critical.

"I do feel like some of the things I do [are] just never enough, and no matter how hard I work on something, there's always gonna be somebody who has their own opinion or who enjoys taking control of the narrative," she said. "And so, that comes to me as a sense of loneliness."

She said it was important to talk about such things, however difficult it may be.

"Just as we feed ourselves for better health and fitness, mental health can only be maintained equally — if not more intentionally — as our physical wellbeing."

The discussion was part of several events hosted by Jill Biden for the spouses of Asia-Pacific leaders in California for the annual Asia-Pacific



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS. BLACKPINK musical performer Rosé, middle, speaks between Kim Keon Hee, the first lady of South Korea, left, and Rachael Marape, the spouse of Papua New Guinea's prime minister, during a talk about mental health at a spousal program held as part of APEC Leaders' Week at the Apple campus in Cupertino, California. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

"People who are older — we never, ever spoke about mental health," Biden said. "There was shame attached to it. But what I find as a teacher — and having my own younger grandchildren in their twenties — I think they're much more open to talking to one another, I think there's far less shame."

The event was moderated by Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. Apple CEO Tim Cook opened the event but blanked briefly when the teleprompter went out.

"Don't you hate that. I hate that," Biden said. Cook recovered, telling the crowd he'd "go ahead and ad lib," then thanked everyone for coming and introduced the first lady.

Cook later defended his tech company's privacy standards when Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail of Malaysia mentioned how artificial intelligence and manipulation can affect mental health, asking the CEO about protections on technology to protect people's private information.

"If you've ever had an Apple watch, you are being watched all the time," she said.

"Absolutely not actually," Cook responded. "We believe that privacy is a fundamental human right."

Kim Keon Hee, the first lady of South Korea, Rachael Marape, the spouse of the prime minister of Papua New Guinea, and Louise Araneta-Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines, also attended.

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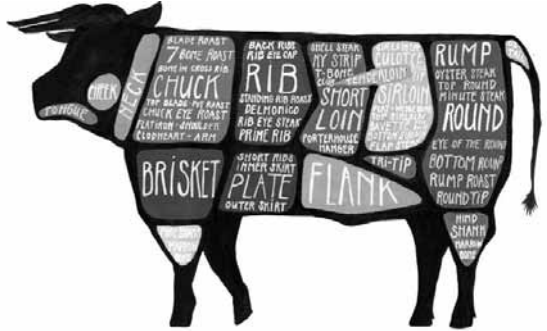
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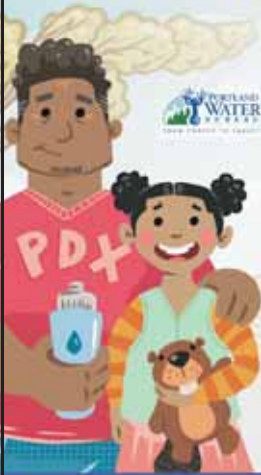
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Events calendar

“Re:Generation — Manifesting at the Peach Blossom Spring”

Currently on view, 11am-3pm (Thu-Sun), Portland Chinatown Museum (127 NW Third Ave, Portland). View “Re:Generation — Manifesting at the Peach Blossom Spring,” a display of works by resident artists Lark Pien, Josh Sin, and Yuyang Zhang, who braid together generations of Pacific Northwest Chinese immigrant history with their personal narratives to reveal the complex and nuanced psychological landscape of being ethnic Chinese living in America. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 224-0008 or visit <www.portlandchinatownmuseum.org>.

“Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland’s Historic Chinatowns”

Currently on view, 11am-3pm (Thu-Sun), Portland Chinatown Museum (127 NW Third Ave, Portland). View “Beyond the Gate: A Tale of Portland’s Historic Chinatowns,” a display of rare objects such as Chinese opera costumes, theatrical sets, bilingual text, audio-visual media, and more that tell a sprawling transnational story of contact and trade between China and the west, focusing on Portland’s Old Chinatown (1850-1905) and New Chinatown (1905-1950). For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 224-0008 or visit <www.portlandchinatownmuseum.org>.

“Boundless: Stories of Asian Art”

Currently on view, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Seattle Art Museum (1300 First Ave, Seattle). View “Boundless: Stories of Asian Art,” a display highlighting themes central to arts and societies of Asia, such as worship and celebration, visual arts and literature, and clothing and identity. The museum’s south galleries feature art inspired by spiritual life and the north galleries show art inspired by material life. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3210 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

“Deities & Demons: Supernatural in Japanese Art”

Currently on view, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Seattle Art Museum (1300 First Ave, Seattle). View “Deities & Demons: Supernatural in Japanese Art,” a display of paintings, sculptures, prints, and textiles from the museum’s collection that presents the rich visual culture of the supernatural in Japan. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3210 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

“Oregon’s Nikkei: An American Story of Resilience”

Currently on view, 11am-3pm (Fri-Sun), Japanese American Museum of Oregon at the Naito Center (411 NW Flanders St, Portland). View “Oregon’s Nikkei: An American Story of Resilience,” an exhibit that highlights the discrimination, resilience, and identity of the Japanese-American community in Oregon. The display begins in rural Oregon and the streets of Portland’s Japantown where Japanese immigrants embraced American ideals. What they built was abruptly taken away during World War II when people of Japanese descent were imprisoned in American internment camps. From early immigration through current day, the exhibit explores the Japanese-American experience and includes the rebuilding of communities and the ongoing fight for justice. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.jamo.org>.

“Be/Longing: Contemporary Asian Art”

Through Dec 10, 10am-5pm (Thu-Sun), Seattle Asian Art Museum (1400 E Prospect St, in Volunteer Park, Seattle). View “Be/Longing: Contemporary Asian Art,” an exhibit featuring 12 artists who were born in different parts of Asia — Azerbaijan, Iran, India, Thailand, China, Korea, and Japan — and have all spent time or moved outside of Asia. Their experiences as both insiders and outsiders have compelled them to explore their Asian heritage from multiple perspectives. Their works, as a result, are at once Asian and global, and comment on fundamental concerns of who we are and where we belong. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3100 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

Christmas Ship Parade

Through Dec 17, Willamette & Columbia Rivers (Portland). Watch two fleets of colorfully decorated ships ply the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. The combined fleets of the Christmas Ship Parade usually average about 50 boats. For route schedule, viewing locations, or to make a donation, visit <www.christmasships.org>.

Omiyage Holiday Store

Through Dec 23, 11am-3pm (Thu-Sun), Japanese American Museum of Oregon (JAMO) at the Naito Center (411 NW Flanders St, Portland). Shop for unique handcrafted Japan-inspired gifts and crafts by local artists, authors, and designers — jewelry, fashion and home accessories, cards, origami creations, art objects, and books — as well as a selection of curated vintage items at JAMO’s Omiyage Holiday Store. For info, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.jamo.org>.

“A Sense of Place: The Art Legacy of George Tsutakawa”

Through Dec 31, 11am-3pm (Thu-Sun), Japanese American Museum of Oregon at the Naito Center (411 NW Flanders St, Portland). View “A Sense of Place: The Art Legacy of George Tsutakawa,” an exhibit presenting a survey of work by the influential Seattle artist, who was inspired by his life in the Pacific Northwest and his Japanese heritage. George Tsutakawa (1910-1997) worked in a variety of media, including watercolor, sumi, sculpture, and fountain design. His public art works, including his signature fountains, can be seen in cities across the U.S., Canada, and Japan. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.jamo.org>.

Satpreet Kahlon

Through Dec 31, 11am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Bellevue Arts Museum (510 Bellevue Way NE,



WINTER WONDERLAND. *Beaverton Winter Lights are on display free to the public nightly through January 4 at Beaverton City Park and The Round. Participants are invited to stroll through the outdoor light displays from 4:00pm to 8:00am. (Photo courtesy of the City of Beaverton)*

Bellevue, Wash.). View “the inscrutable shape of longing,” an exhibit by Satpreet Kahlon. In her sculptures and installations, Kahlon explores the messiness, contradictions, and nuances of living inside a body shaped by one’s lived experience and by one’s cultural and ancestral history. The artist was born in Bhagowal, India, near the Pakistani border and raised in the United States. For info, call (425) 519-0770 or visit <www.bellevuearts.org>.

“Tricksters”

Through Dec 31, 10am-5pm (Wed-Mon), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “Tricksters,” an exhibit in the Uwajimaya KidPlace Gallery that highlights clever, mischievous characters from folklore. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

Beaverton Winter Lights

Through Jan 4, 4pm-8am, Beaverton City Park (SW 5th St & SW Hall Blvd, Beaverton) & The Round (12655 SW Millikan Way, Beaverton). Stroll along outdoor light displays at Beaverton City Park and The Round nightly from 4:00pm to 8:00am. Participants are encouraged to bring a camera to capture the moment, dress in warm clothing, and pack an umbrella in case of rain. Community members are also invited to join the city’s Tree Lighting Event at City Park on Friday, December 8 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Tree Lighting activities include local music performances, free craft kits for children, roaming seasonal characters, free hot cocoa and cookies (while supplies last), and more. For info, call (503) 526-2222 or visit <www.beavertonoregon.gov/winterlights>.

ZooLights

Through Jan 7, 4:30-8pm (except Dec 25), Oregon Zoo (4001 SW Canyon Rd, Portland). Ring in the holiday season at the Oregon Zoo’s ZooLights display. The family tradition features more than a million-and-a-half lights illuminating life-size animal silhouettes, trees, buildings, walkways, and the zoo train. Popular returning displays include trumpeting elephants, swinging siamangs, a 35-foot-long Chinese dragon, leaping reindeer, playful penguins, and more. Admission to ZooLights is only \$12 per person on January 1, 5, 6, and 7. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 226-1561 or visit <www.oregonzoo.org/zoolights>.

“Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence, from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston”

Through Jan 21, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Seattle Art Museum (1300 First Ave, Seattle). View “Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence, from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,” a display highlighting the works of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), who has become one of the most famous Japanese artists in the world. The exhibit explores the fascinating life and enduring legacy of this trailblazing master by pairing more than 100 of his woodblock prints, paintings, and illustrated books alongside more than 200 works by his teachers, students, rivals, and admirers, including Yoshitomo Nara, Chiho Aoshima, and Helen Frankenthaler. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3210 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

Hanako O’Leary

Through Jan 28, 11am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Frye Art Museum (704 Terry Ave, Seattle). View “Izanami,” the first solo museum presentation of works by Seattle artist Hanako O’Leary. O’Leary’s ceramic objects embrace visual storytelling, interweaving Shinto mythology and contemporary feminist ideologies. Raised by her Japanese mother and American father in the Midwest, she travelled yearly to her maternal home, Japan’s Setonaikai Islands. Influenced by these experiences, as well as folkloric Japanese imagery, the artist bridges her identities and matriarchal lineages to narrate her own “American story.” For info, call (206) 622-9250 or visit <www.fryemuseum.org>.

“Nobody Lives Here: The People in the Path of Progress”

Through Mar 17, 10am-5pm (Wed-Mon), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “Nobody Lives Here: The People in the Path of Progress,” an exhibit about the high toll of transit infrastructure on vulnerable communities. In the display, artist and historian Tessa Hulls illuminates the businesses, homes, and people who were displaced when the I-5 freeway was built through the Chinatown-International District in the 1960s. Using historic photos, oral histories, and archival research, “Nobody Lives Here” connects this history to broader themes of racist land use policy and the erasure of marginalized communities — nationally and locally, past and present. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

“Stone Images XIII”

Through Mar 31, 10am-4pm (Tue-Sun), Pacific Bonsai Museum (2515 S 336th St, Federal Way, Wash.). View “Stone Images XIII,” the latest in a series of viewing stone exhibits presented annually by the Northwest Viewing Stone Group of the Puget Sound Bonsai Association. The practice of viewing and appreciating stones dates back more than 1,500 years. The art originated in China, Japan, and Korea, but has spread during the past century and is now practiced worldwide. “Viewing Stones” are naturally formed stones valued for their shape, color, beauty, pattern, and/or for what they can be seen to represent. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (253) 353-7345 or visit <www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org>.

“Guma’ Gela’: Part Land, Part Sea, All Ancestry”

Through May 12, 10am-5pm (Wed-Mon), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “Guma’ Gela’: Part Land, Part Sea, All Ancestry,” an exhibit featuring the work of the Guma’ Gela’, a queer CHamoru art collective comprised of members from the Marianas and in the diaspora. The exhibit explores their motto, “part land, part sea, all ancestry,” through a broad spectrum of media, including sculpture, soundscape, writing, printmaking, weaving, costume design, adornments, and more. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

“Be Water, My Friend: The Teachings of Bruce Lee”

Through July 26, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “Be Water, My Friend: The Teachings of Bruce Lee,” an

Continued on page 17

Took the wrong medicine?

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For timely information about upcoming events, visit <www.facebook.com/TheAsianReporter>.

Events calendar

Continued from page 16

interactive exhibit that invites viewers to step into the mind, body, and spirit of Bruce Lee to see how his unquenchable pursuit of knowledge informed his philosophy and life. The display follows Bruce’s path, beginning with his revelations on water, through the wealth of knowledge found in his 2,800-book personal library, to his philosophy of self-understanding and self-expression. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

“Sound Check! The Music We Make”

Through Sep 14, 2024, 10am-5pm (Wed-Mon), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “Sound Check! The Music We Make,” an exhibit exploring the role music has played in Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander lives and communities as an element of cultural heritage/identity, a form of personal/creative expression, a commercial industry, a connecting/healing force, and an integral part of thriving communities and culture. The interactive display includes behind-the-scenes photos, framed artworks, podcasts, artifacts, storylines, audio, and video. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

“Fields of Color”

Dec 7-Jan 20 (Tue-Sat), 11am-5:30pm; Dec 7, 5-8pm (reception); ArtXchange (512 First Ave S, Seattle). View “Fields of Color,” a display of works by William Song and Marcio Diaz, who layer paint and color to create textural abstract paintings in their own signature styles. Song uses color and depth to create energetic portals attuned to express connection, contemplation, and freedom, while Díaz’s canvasses are covered in stalagmites of paint and evoke macro and micro patterns found in the natural world. For info, call (206) 839-0377 or visit <www.artxchange.org>.

The Boy and the Heron

Opens Dec 8, Living Room Theaters (SW 10th Ave & SW Stark St, Portland). Watch *The Boy and the Heron*, a film about a young boy named Mahito who yearns for his mother while venturing into a world shared by the living and the dead. *The Boy and the Heron* is director Hayao Miyazaki’s first feature film in 10 years. For info, showtimes, or to purchase tickets, call (971) 222-2010 or visit <www.livingroomtheaters.com>.

ZooZoo

Dec 8-Jan 1, Imago Theatre (17 SE Eighth Ave, Portland). Watch *ZooZoo*, an Imago Theatre performance featuring introverted frogs, hippos with insomnia, tricky penguins, paradoxical polar bears, and more. The show also includes a preview of Imago’s new production, *Roo!* For info, showtimes, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 231-9581 or visit <www.imagotheatre.com>.

Free one-on-one medical insurance consulting sessions

Dec 9, 1-3pm, Cedar Hills Recreation Center, 11640 SW Park Way, Portland). The Chinese Friendship Association of Portland is working with the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace to provide medical insurance consulting support to members of the community. To learn about the requirements, or to schedule a one-on-one appointment, call (971) 865-7889 or e-mail <cfapportland@gmail.com>.

PAM free family day

Dec 10, 10am-5pm, Portland Art Museum (1219 SW Park Ave, Portland). Enjoy free admission to the Portland Art Museum during Miller Family Free Day. For info, call (503) 226-2811 or visit <www.portlandartmuseum.org>.

Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket

Dec 10, 7:30pm (screening), 5:30pm (Mecha Market), Hollywood Theatre (4122 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland). Join the Hollywood Theatre as it hosts the first U.S. screening of the legendary *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket* as part of its cult classic anime series. The screening is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view the six-episode classic on the big screen. In celebration of the occasion, AniMayhem will hold a “Mecha Market” at 5:30pm in the lobby. For info, call (503) 281-4215 or visit <www.hollywoodtheatre.org>.

“Celebrate PACCO!”

Dec 15, 6-10pm, The Ritz-Carlton, Portland (900 SW Washington St, Portland). Join the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon (PACCO) for “Celebrate PACCO!” The in-person event is being held to show appreciation to the organization’s staff, community, and volunteers for their commitment to the community. For info, or to register, call (503) 862-6853 or visit <www.pacco.org>.

Winter Bonsai Solstice

Dec 16, 4-7pm, Pacific Bonsai Museum (2515 S 336th St, Federal Way, Wash.). Join the Pacific Bonsai Museum as it illuminates its world-renowned bonsai collection in a serene display of holiday magic at Winter Bonsai Solstice. During the evening, visitors are able to view 50 bonsai, some with special lighting, and shop at two holiday pop-up shops. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own flashlights. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (253) 353-7345 or visit <www.pacific



WINTER BONSAI. The Pacific Bonsai Museum in Federal Way is illuminating its world-renowned bonsai collection in a serene display of holiday magic during Winter Bonsai Solstice. The one-day event takes place on December 16 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm. (Photos/Pacific Bonsai Museum)

bonsaimuseum.org>.

Aurora Chorus

Dec 16, 7pm, First United Methodist Church (1838 SW Jefferson St, Portland). Attend “Inner Gardens,” a winter concert by the Aurora Chorus. The performance features songs that cultivate vitality through the transfiguration of winter. To buy tickets, call (808) 359-4038 (daytime) or (503) 460-3482 (evening), or visit <www.aurorachorus.org>.

BIPOC Children’s Book Fair

Dec 23, noon-4pm, Norse Hall (111 NE 11th Ave, Portland). Children and families are invited to attend the inaugural BIPOC Children’s Book Fair. The event features award-winning BIPOC authors, books available for sale, and autograph opportunities. K. Tempest Bradford and the nonprofit Carl Brandon Society have partnered to launch the book fair. Admission is \$5 per person (waived on request) with kids age two and younger admitted free. All children and teens in attendance are able to take a book of their choice home for free. Face masks are required to attend. Tickets must be reserved online prior to the event at <www.carlbrandon.org/bbf>.

White House Fellows Program

Jan 5, noon (application deadline). Apply for the White House Fellows Class of 2024-2025. The application window closes January 5 at noon. For more info, eligibility requirements, selection criteria, or to ask specific questions, call the program office at (202) 395-4522 or e-mail <whitehousefellows@who.eop.gov>.

The Lion King

Jan 7-28, Keller Auditorium (222 SW Clay St, Portland). Experience the stunning artistry, unforgettable music, and exhilarating choreography of *The Lion King*. The Serengeti comes to life as never before in the show, when giraffes strut, birds swoop, gazelles leap, and music soars. The production, which is presented by Broadway in Portland, runs 2 hours, 30 minutes with one intermission. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 248-4335, or visit <www.portland5.com> or <www.broadwayinportland.com>.

NEED HELP FINDING INSURANCE?

Marketplace & OHP Health Insurance Plans

The Chinese Friendship Association of Portland is working with the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace to provide support to members of the community.

If you meet the following requirements, we can help you to enroll in health insurance coverage through the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace.

1. Must live in Oregon.
2. Must be a U.S. citizen or national (or be lawfully present).
3. Can’t be incarcerated.
4. Annual income above 138% of federal poverty level (\$20,124 for a single person and \$34,545 for a family of 3 in 2023) and are not eligible for coverage through an employer or public program (like OHP or Medicare) may be able to eligible to enroll in Marketplace Plans.
5. People who don’t have employer-based coverage.
6. Small business/self-employed.
7. Families in which some are OHP eligible but some are not.
8. Financial help is available such as Premium Tax credits and cost sharing reductions for qualified individuals and families.
9. We can also help qualified individuals and families with OHP applications.



Please call (971) 865-7889 or e-mail <cfapportland@gmail.com>

One-on-one medical insurance consulting session:
December 9, 2023, 1:00pm to 3:00pm
Cedar Hills Recreation Center, 11640 SW Park Way, Portland, OR 97225

Please join us for a focus group discussion on the use of tobacco, including the impact of vaping products on the Asian American/Pacific Islander community.

This event aims to provide an interactive platform for us to share experiences and provide suggestions and solutions.

Topic of the focus meeting:

Tobacco-use issues and suggested solutions among AAPI communities.

Requirements to be in the meeting:

18 to 65 years old. Must be a resident of Oregon in an AAPI community and CURRENT tobacco user.

As a thank you for your participation, a gift card will be issued after the meeting as a token of our appreciation for your support.

If you have any questions, need further information, or wish to sign up, please contact us at (971) 865-7889 or e-mail <cfapportland@gmail.com>.

Organized by the Chinese Friendship Association of Portland



OREGON EPISCOPAL SCHOOL INFORMATION EVENING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4 • 7 p.m.

Pre-K through Grade 12

Connect with Middle/Upper School Panelists

Explore Lower School Classrooms

Engage with Teachers, Students, OES Leadership



oes.edu/infoevening
503-768-3115



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PEP22-08-03-002

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NORTHWEST JOB MARKET



Join our Team – We’re Hiring

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You Belong with Team Tigard

Join our Team – We’re Hiring

[<https://www.tigard-or.gov>](https://www.tigard-or.gov)

JOIN THE PPS NUTRITION SERVICES TEAM



Now hiring part-time rover assistants for the 2023-2024 school year.

[<https://linktr.ee/ppscareers>](https://linktr.ee/ppscareers)

BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

METRO SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION SERVICES FOR THE OREGON ZOO

RFP 4266

Metro is seeking proposals from permitted haulers to pick up solid waste, recyclable materials and organics/food scrap waste for the Oregon Zoo. Metro seeks active and engaged partnerships and the ability to help Metro to meet recycling recovery goals.

Electronic proposals only are due no later than January 17, 2024, at 2:00pm to:

[<http://bidlocker.us/a/oregonmetro/BidLocker>](http://bidlocker.us/a/oregonmetro/BidLocker)

Details are provided in the solicitation document. Solicitation documents can be viewed and downloaded from Bid Locker at:

[<http://bidlocker.us/a/oregonmetro/BidLocker>](http://bidlocker.us/a/oregonmetro/BidLocker)

Pre-Proposal Conference/Walkthrough: A voluntary pre-proposal conference will be held at the Oregon Zoo on December 12, 2023, at 12:30pm. Interested bidders and subcontractors are encouraged to attend the conference to gain information about the RFP requirements.

Metro may accept or reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, or waive irregularities not affecting substantial rights if such action is deemed in the public interest.

Metro extends equal opportunity to all persons and specifically encourages minority, women-owned and emerging small businesses to access and participate in this and all Metro projects, programs and services.

Metro and its contractors will not discriminate against any person(s), employee or applicant for employment based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, political affiliation or marital status. Metro fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, see [<www.oregonmetro.gov>](http://www.oregonmetro.gov).

The Asian Reporter is published on the first Monday each month.

The classified advertising deadlines for our next two print editions are:

January 1 issue: Friday, December 29, 2:00pm
February 5 issue: Friday, February 2, 2:00pm

Additional career, public notice, bid & sub-bid listings are updated online as new opportunities arrive.

View new posts at
[<www.asianreporter.com/nwjobmarket.htm>](http://www.asianreporter.com/nwjobmarket.htm)
or [<www.asianreporter.com/notices.htm>](http://www.asianreporter.com/notices.htm).

BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

INVITATION TO BID



CITY OF MILWAUKIE
CITY OF MILWAUKIE, OREGON
MILWAUKIE NEIGHBORHOOD
PARKS CONSTRUCTION
PROJECT

Bid Opening: Sealed Bids will be received electronically by the City of Milwaukie (“City”) until **2:00pm, December 19, 2023**. Scanned bid shall be e-mailed to Public Works Director Peter Passarelli at [<passarellip@milwaukieoregon.gov>](mailto:passarellip@milwaukieoregon.gov) on or before the above bid date and time. No hard copies or faxed quotes will be accepted or considered. Bids will be publicly opened using online meeting software. A link to the online bid opening will be provided to prospective bidders in an addendum, and the opening procedure will be recorded. First-Tier Subcontractor Disclosure Statements must be submitted by e-mail to [<passarellip@milwaukieoregon.gov>](mailto:passarellip@milwaukieoregon.gov) no more than two (2) working hours after the bid submission deadline.

The proposed project is located at Scott Park (10660 SE 21st Ave., Milwaukie, OR 97222), Bowman-Brae Park (4225 SE Bowman St., Milwaukie, OR 97222) and Balfour Park (3039 SE Balfour St., Milwaukie, OR 97222) in Milwaukie, Oregon and consists of the following base work:

♦ **Scott Park:** Site area is 20,400 Sq. Ft. The existing path and part of the lawn will be demolished for the planned site features which include a play area, natural play features, walking trails, pond overlook and other amenities. The existing parking, sidewalk, amphitheater, and veterans’ memorial will remain.

♦ **Balfour Park:** Site area is 35,560 Sq. Ft. Low-impact clearing and grading, and selective tree removal will allow for proposed park features, which include a play area, natural play features, walking trails, a shelter, and other amenities.

♦ **Bowman-Brae Park:** Total site area is 30,000 Sq. Ft. Clearing, regrading, and selective tree removal will allow for proposed park features, which include a play area, walking trails, a shelter, and other amenities.

Program Funding: The funding for this project is provided using federal dollars received by the City through the State of Oregon Department of Administrative Services’ Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Federal Award #SLFRP4454; CFDA #21.027). Prospective contractors will be required to comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and requirements.

Documents: Digital copies of the Bid Documents may be downloaded and examined at [<http://bids.milwaukieoregon.gov/>](http://bids.milwaukieoregon.gov). Interested parties will need to create a free login account to view contract documents. The account will be used to notify plan holders of any addenda throughout the bidding process.

Pre-Bid Conference: A mandatory pre-bid conference will be held at 8:30am on November 29, 2023 at Milwaukie City Hall, Dogwood Community Room,

Oregon Public Contracting Law: Bidders are required to comply with applicable bidding and contracting procedures and regulations. The provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. 3141 et seq.) apply to this federally-funded public improvement project. The work is a public works project subject to ORS 279C.800 to 279C.870.

Bid Security: Each bid must contain a statement as to whether the bidder is a resident bidder, as defined in ORS 279.029. Each bid must be submitted on the prescribed form and accompanied by a Surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit issued by an insured institution as defined in ORS 706.008, or security in the form of a certified check or cashier’s check made payable to the City of Milwaukie in an amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the bid amount.

City’s Reservations: The City reserves the right to reject any or all bids for good cause, reject any or all bids upon a finding by the City that it is in the public interest to do so, or to accept that lowest bid. Bids may be held by the City for a period not to exceed sixty (60) days from the date bids are due for the purpose of reviewing Bid Documents and investigating qualifications of bidders.

Questions: For information regarding this project, send questions through the City’s Bid Management System at [<https://bids.milwaukieoregon.gov/>](https://bids.milwaukieoregon.gov).

Design Firm: The City contracted with GreenWorks PC (“Engineer”) to develop the bid documents and assist with construction administration.

Date this was advertised: November 15, 2023



VANCOUVER
HOUSING AUTHORITY

VANCOUVER HOUSING
AUTHORITY ANNOUNCES
WAITLIST OPENING FOR
ALLEGRO POINTE

Vancouver Housing Authority is accepting applications for new Project-Based Vouchers for studio, one-bedroom, and a two-bedroom unit at Allegro Pointe. Allegro Pointe is a new, mixed-income building where we will prioritize households 62 years or older and/or individuals with verified disabilities for the subsidized apartments.

The building is located near Fourth Plain Blvd and Andresen Rd for easy public transportation access.

This is a newly constructed, three-floor apartment building with an elevator and washer/dryer in unit.

Applications will be selected through a random lottery. Applications are being accepted beginning December 11, 2023, through March 1, 2024.

To apply, please create or update your existing applicant portal at our website:

[<https://vhausa.myhousing.com>](https://vhausa.myhousing.com)

Applicants must have income less than 50% of Area Median Income for their family size. For a family of one, the 2023 limit is \$39,500; for a family of two, this limit is \$45,150. Applicants will be subject to background checks and approval by the property management company.



Equal Housing Opportunity

SUB-BIDS REQUESTED

COUGAR CREEK MFH
RENOVATION

8415 NE Hazel Dell Ave
Vancouver, WA 98665

Bids Due: December 19, 2023 at 3:00pm

LMC Construction is soliciting proposals for the Cougar Creek Multi-Family Housing Renovation. The existing community consists of nine buildings, including a 1-story community building, seven 2-story residential buildings and one 3-story residential building with a total of 72 apartments.

Scopes Bidding:

All except Electrical, Solar and Fire Suppression.

Project Requirements:

Project is **NOT** subject to Prevailing Wages. Please bid using your standard wage rates.

Bid Document Link:

[<https://bids.lmcconstruction.com/CougarCreek>](https://bids.lmcconstruction.com/CougarCreek)

Contact and Bid Submissions:

Alex Hall, [<alexh@lmcconstruction.com>](mailto:alexh@lmcconstruction.com)



19200 SW Teton Avenue, Tualatin, OR 97062
P: (503) 646-0521 | F: (503) 646-6823

LMC Construction is an Equal Opportunity Employer and requests sub-bids from Disadvantaged, Minority, Women, Emerging, and Service-Disabled Veteran businesses.
CCB# 161282



Celebrate The Year
of the Dragon

February 10, 2024 to January 28, 2025!

The AR’s Lunar New Year special section will be published February 5, 2024.

Display advertising space reservations for the special issue are due Monday, January 22 at 5:00pm.

To place a space reservation, please contact our Advertising Department at (503) 283-4440 or [<ads@asianreporter.com>](mailto:ads@asianreporter.com).

Godzilla film director pursuing Japanese spirituality of 1954 original

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Godzilla, the nightmarish radiation spewing monster born out of nuclear weapons, has stomped through many movies, including several Hollywood remakes.

Takashi Yamazaki, the director behind the latest Godzilla movie, was determined to bring out what he believes is the essentially Japanese spirituality that characterizes the 1954 original.

In that classic, directed by Ishiro Honda, a man sweated inside a rubber suit and trampled over cityscape miniatures to tell the story of a prehistoric creature mistakenly brought to life by radiation from nuclear testing in the Pacific. The monster in *Godzilla Minus One* is all computer graphics.

“I love the original Godzilla, and I felt I should stay true to that spirit, addressing the issues of war and nuclear weapons,”



GODZILLA MINUS ONE. Pictured is a scene from the new Godzilla film, *Godzilla Minus One*. Takashi Yamazaki, the director behind the latest version of *Godzilla*, was determined to bring out what he believes is the essentially Japanese spirituality that characterizes the 1954 original. (Toho International via AP)

a period of uncertainty, with the war in Ukraine and the coronavirus pandemic. It was a mood that fit his supernatural “very Japanese” *Godzilla*, Yamazaki said at the Tokyo International Film Festival, where *Godzilla Minus One* was the closing film. It opened in Japanese theaters last month.

“You have to quiet it down,” he told The Associated Press of *Godzilla*, as if only a prayer can calm or stop the monster — as opposed to trying to kill it.

Set just after Japan’s surrender in World War II, Yamazaki’s rendition predates the original and portrays a nation so devastated by war it’s left with nothing, let alone any weapons to fight off *Godzilla*.

Continued on page 14

Gay couple in Nepal becomes the first to officially register same-sex marriage in the country

By Binaj Gurubacharya
The Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — A gay couple in Nepal became the first in the nation to receive official same-sex marriage status last month. The Himalayan nation is one of the first in Asia to allow it.

“After 23 years of struggle we got this historic achievement, and finally Maya and Surendra got their marriage registered at the local administration office,” said Sunil Babu Pant, an openly gay former parliamentarian and leading LGBTQ+ rights activist.

Pant was present with Surendra Pandey and Maya Gurung when they registered their marriage at the Dorje village council office, located in the mountains west of the capital, Kathmandu.

Earlier this year, Nepal’s supreme court issued an interim order enabling the registration of same-sex marriages for the first time.



HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT. In this handout photo provided by Sunil Babu Pant, same-sex couple Surendra Pandey, center left, and Maya Gurung, center right, who were married six years ago, pose for a photograph with their marriage registration certificate at Dorje village council office, located in the mountains west of the capital of Kathmandu, Nepal. The couple became the first in the nation to receive official same-sex marriage status. The Himalayan nation is one of the first in Asia to allow it. (Sunil Babu Pant via AP)

The couple married six years ago at a temple following Hindu tradition, with a priest conducting the rituals among friends and family. But they had no certificate showing their marriage was legal.

Nepal has undergone a transformation since a court decision in 2007 asked the government to make changes in favor of LGBTQ+ people. People who do not identify as female or male are now able to choose “third gender” on their passports and other government documents. The constitution adopted in 2015 also explicitly states there can be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.



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