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Netflix phenomenon *KPop Demon Hunters* is officially eligible for the Oscars



KPOP DEMON HUNTERS. Characters (L-R) Mira, Rumi, and Zoey are seen in a scene from *KPop Demon Hunters*. Netflix has said *KPop Demon Hunters* is its most watched film of all time and has amassed more than 541 million hours viewed worldwide. Pictured in the bottom image are characters (L-R) Zoey, Rumi, and Mira. See story on page 13. (Netflix via AP)



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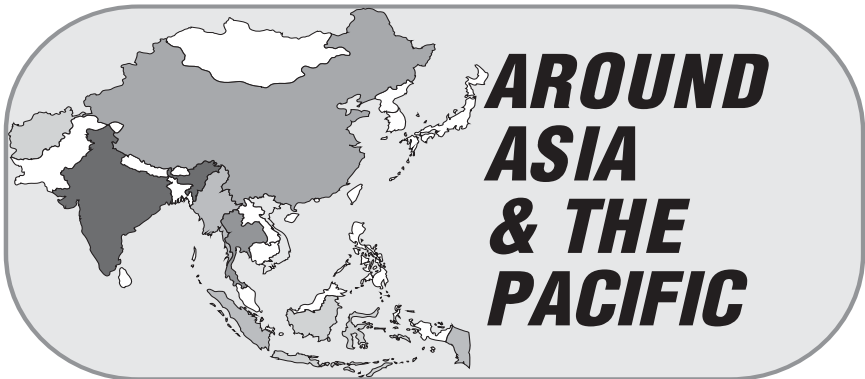
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K-pop stars announce flurry of donations for HK fire victims

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — K-pop band aespa and other South Korean pop stars have announced a flurry of donations to support victims of an apartment fire in Hong Kong that killed at least 128 people in one of the city’s deadliest blazes. Girl group aespa said they will donate 500,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$64,000) to the Hong Kong Red Cross, according to a post on their official Weibo account. “We express our deepest sorrow regarding this heartbreaking news,” the band said. Stray Kids pledged 1 million Hong Kong dollars (\$128,000) through World Vision Hong Kong for temporary housing and other support for affected children and residents. “We were all very heavy-hearted upon hearing the unfortunate news from Hong Kong,” the group said. SM and JYP Entertainment, two of South Korea’s biggest entertainment companies, donated a combined 3 million Hong Kong dollars (\$384,000) for emergency relief and disaster recovery. Other K-pop groups that also pledged donations included boy bands Riize, EXO-CBX, and KickFlip who contributed 100,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$12,800) through World Vision Hong Kong. Organizers of the MAMA AWARDS, an annual two-day K-pop awards ceremony scheduled over the weekend in Hong Kong, faced online criticism in South Korea for not cancelling the event in light of the fire tragedy. South Korean entertainment company CJ E&M cancelled both days of red carpet events but said the main ceremony would proceed. “We express our deepest condolences to those who lost their lives in the fire in Hong Kong,” CJ E&M said in a statement. The company said the awards would add a “Support Hong Kong” message and include time for mourning. Organizers also pledged to donate 20 million Hong Kong dollars (\$2.6 million) to the support fund established by the Hong Kong government. “We believe in the healing and solidarity power of music,” the statement said.

India protests China’s “arbitrary detention” of citizen

NEW DELHI (AP) — India has lodged a protest with China over what it called an “arbitrary detention” of an Indian citizen at the Shanghai airport after the traveller from a northeastern state said she was held for hours because Chinese authorities refused to recognize her passport. The woman, who was stopped by Chinese authorities during a layover in Shanghai en route to Japan on November 21, said she was told her passport was invalid because her birthplace, the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, is considered to be Chinese territory. Pem Wang Thongdok said in a post on X that she was held at the airport for 18 hours. While India maintains Arunachal Pradesh to be one of its states in the northeast, Beijing calls it a part of China and names it Zangnan, or Southern Tibet. The latest episode adds pressure to a relationship already strained by the military standoff along the Himalayan frontier, restrictions on trade and technology, and competing regional interests. It comes at a time when the two nuclear-armed rivals have been working to stabilize their ties following the deadly border clash of June 2020. The strain highlights how the continuing dispute over Arunachal Pradesh remains a major obstacle to improving relations between the Asian neighbors. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China’s border inspection authorities handled the case “in accordance with laws and regulations” and that it had “fully protected the legitimate rights and interests” of the person involved. She denied claims that the individual was detained or harassed. Mao also reiterated that Zangnan was a Chinese territory and that Beijing never recognized the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which it claims was illegally established by India. India’s Foreign Ministry also responded, stating that Arunachal Pradesh was an integral and inalienable part of India. “No amount of denial by the Chinese side is going to change this indisputable reality,” ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement. He said Chinese authorities haven’t been able to explain the woman’s detention, which was in “violation of several conventions governing international air travel.” “The action by the Chinese authorities also violate their own regulations that allow visa free transit up to 24 hours for nationals of all countries,” Jaiswal said.

Japan’s exports rise, but Trump’s tariffs dent U.S. shipments

TOKYO (AP) — Japan’s global exports rose 3.7% in October from a year earlier while imports from the world edged up 0.6%, according to government data released. Exports to the U.S. dipped 3.1%, marking the seventh straight month of year-on-year declines mainly due to higher U.S. tariffs, Finance Ministry data showed. President Donald Trump announced a trade framework with Japan in July, placing a 15% tax on goods imported from that nation. That’s lower than the 25% rate Trump initially said would kick in starting in August. Previously, tariffs on most goods stood at 2.5%. It’s a heavy burden for an export dependent nation that is a major U.S. ally, but shipments to the rest of Asia are helping to offset those lost sales. Japan’s soybean imports from around the world surged 37.3% from a year earlier, while imports of iron and steel products dipped 17.1%. Imports from the U.S. jumped 20.9% in October from a year earlier, mainly petroleum and food such as grains. Exports of computer parts and other machinery and busses and trucks to the U.S. declined. Japan’s exports to China climbed 2.1% last month from a year earlier. Exports to Hong Kong surged 19.2%, while those to Taiwan were up 17.7%. As a result, Japan narrowed its overall trade deficit to 231.77 billion yen (\$1.5 billion) in October, down from 499.95 billion yen a year earlier. New worries have emerged recently over trade with China after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, the nation’s first female leader, made comments about Taiwan that have angered China,. That prompted Beijing to issue an advisory against travel to Japan.



CLOSE CALL. In this November 23, 2025 photo, an emergency rescue team transports an elderly woman who was discovered to still be alive — after being considered deceased — to a local hospital before her scheduled cremation at Wat Rat Prakhong Tham temple in Nonthaburi province, Thailand. (Wat Rat Prakhong Tham via AP)

Thai woman found alive in coffin after being brought in for cremation

BANGKOK (AP) — A woman in Thailand shocked temple staff when she started moving in her coffin after being brought in for cremation.

Wat Rat Prakhong Tham, a Buddhist temple in the province of Nonthaburi on the outskirts of Bangkok, posted a video on its Facebook page showing a woman lying in a white coffin in the back of a pickup truck, slightly moving her arms and head, leaving temple staff bewildered.

Pairat Soodthoop, the temple’s general and financial affairs manager, told The Associated Press that the 65-year-old woman’s brother drove her from the province of Phitsanulok to be cremated.

He said they heard a faint knock coming from the coffin.

“I was a bit surprised, so I asked them to open the coffin, and everyone was startled,” he said. “I saw her opening her eyes slightly and knocking on the side of the coffin. She must have been knocking for quite some time.”

According to Pairat, the brother said his sister had been bedridden for about two years, when her health deteriorated and she became unresponsive, appearing to stop breathing two days ago. The brother then placed her in a coffin and made the 300-mile journey to a hospital in Bangkok, to which the woman had previously expressed a wish to donate her organs.

The hospital refused to accept the brother’s offer as he didn’t have an official death certificate, Pairat said. His temple offers a free

cremation service, which is why the brother approached them on Sunday, but was also refused due to the missing document.

The temple manager said that while he was explaining how to get a death certificate, they heard the knocking. They then assessed her and sent her to a nearby hospital.

The abbot said the temple would cover her medical expenses, according to Pairat.

□

Air pollution levels surge in New Delhi, sparking rare protests

By Rishi Lekhi

The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — A thick layer of smog enveloped India’s capital in November, filling the air with an acrid smell as pollution levels surged and worsened a public health crisis that has prompted its residents to take the streets to protest and demand government action.

New Delhi’s air quality index stood at 344, a level considered “severe” and dangerous to breathe, according to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recommended exposure limits.

Hundreds of people, including parents and environmental activists, gathered at New Delhi’s India Gate in a rare protest, urging authorities to act. Many wore masks and carried placards, with one reading: “I miss breathing.”

“I am here just as a citizen who cares and

Continued on page 10



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Nepal Rupee	143.02
Pakistani Rupee	280.61
Papua N.G. Kina	4.24
Philippine Peso	58.66
Russian Ruble	77.661
Saudi Riyal	3.75
Singapore Dollar	1.2962
South Korean Won	1468.4
Sri Lankan Rupee	307.74
Taiwan Dollar	31.385
Thai Baht	32.195
Vietnam Dong	26393

China's diesel trucks are shifting to electric. That could change global LNG and diesel demand.

By Aniruddha Ghosal
The Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — China is replacing its diesel trucks with electric models faster than expected, potentially reshaping global fuel demand and the future of heavy transport.

In 2020, nearly all new trucks in China ran on diesel. By the first half of 2025, battery-powered trucks accounted for 22% of new heavy truck sales, up from 9.2% in the same period in 2024, according to Commercial Vehicle World, a Beijing-based trucking data provider. The British research firm BMI forecasts electric trucks will reach nearly 46% of new sales this year and 60% next year.

Heavy trucks carry the lifeblood of modern economies. They also contribute significantly to global emissions of carbon dioxide: In 2019, road freight generated a third of all transport-related carbon emissions.

Trucking has been considered hard to decarbonize since electric trucks with heavy batteries can carry less cargo than those using energy-dense diesel. Proponents of liquefied natural gas have viewed it as a less polluting option while technology for electric heavy vehicles matures.

Liquefied natural gas, or LNG, is natural gas cooled to a liquid fuel for easy storage and transport.

China's trucking fleet, the world's second-largest after the U.S., still mainly runs on diesel, but the landscape is shifting. Transport fuel demand is plateauing, according to the International Energy Agency and diesel use in China could decline faster than many expect, said Christopher Doleman, an analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Electric trucks now outsell LNG models in China, so its demand for fossil fuels could fall, and "in other countries, it might never take off," he said.

Costs fall in China's electric truck pivot

The share of electrics in new truck sales, from 8% in 2024 to 28% by August 2025, has more than tripled as prices have fallen. Electric trucks outsold LNG-powered vehicles in China for five consecutive months this year, according to Commercial Vehicle World.

While electric trucks are two to three times more expensive than diesel ones and cost roughly 18% more than LNG trucks, their higher energy efficiency and lower costs can save owners an estimated 10% to 26% over the vehicle's lifetime, according to research by Chinese scientists.

"When it comes to heavy trucks, the fleet owners in China are very bottom-line driven," Doleman said.

Early sales were buoyed by generous government incentives like a 2024 scheme for truck owners to trade in old vehicles. Owners can get up to about \$19,000 to replace older trucks with newer or electric models.

Investments in charging infrastructure are also boosting demand for electric trucks.

Major logistics hubs, including in the Yangtze River Delta, have added dedicated charging stations along key freight routes. Cities like Beijing and Shanghai have built heavy-duty charging hubs along highways that can charge trucks in minutes.

CATL, the world's largest maker of electric vehicle batteries, launched a



time-saving battery-swapping system for heavy trucks in May and said it plans a nationwide network of swap stations covering 150,000 kilometers (about 93,000 miles) out of China's 184,000 kms (about 114,000 miles) of expressways.

Global energy markets will feel the impact

The surge in sales of electric trucks is cutting diesel use and could reshape future LNG demand, analysts say.

Diesel consumption in China, the second-largest consumer of the fuel after the U.S., fell to 3.9 million barrels per day in June 2024, down 11% year-on-year and the largest drop since mid-2021, partly reflecting the shift to LNG and electric trucks, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

"The rise of China's electric truck sector is one of the more under-reported stories in the global energy transition, especially given its potential impact on regional diesel trade flows," said Tim Daiss of APAC Energy Consultancy.

LNG truck sales peaked in September 2023 and March 2024 after China eased transport restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, said Liuhanzi Yang of the International Council on Clean Transportation Beijing. By June 2025, sales had slipped 6% as electric trucks gained ground.

Shell's 2025 LNG Outlook projects that demand for imported LNG in China, the world's largest LNG importer, will continue to rise partly due to LNG trucks. It also suggests LNG trucking might expand to other markets, such as India.

China's electric trucks are already cutting oil demand by the equivalent of more than a million barrels a day, estimates the New York-based research provider Rhodium Group.

But Doleman views LNG as a "transitional step" unlikely to be seen apart from in China, where a vast pipeline infrastructure, abundant domestic gas production, and byproducts like coke oven gas created conditions conducive to LNG-fuelled trucking not seen elsewhere.

China is planning new emission standards for vehicles that will limit multiple pollutants and set average greenhouse gas targets across a manufacturer's fleet. This will make it "almost impossible" for companies relying solely on fossil-fuel vehicles to comply, Yang said.

A 2020 ICCT study found LNG-fuelled trucks cut emissions by 2% to 9% over 100 years but can be more polluting in the short run due to leaks of methane, a potent planet-warming gas that can trap more

than 80 times more heat in the atmosphere in the short term than carbon dioxide.

Modern diesel now nearly matches LNG in air-quality performance.

China is eyeing the global electric truck market

Already the world's largest exporter of passenger cars, China is turning its sights to the global electric truck market.

Chinese automakers have kept costs down and sped up truck manufacturing while ensuring different parts work seamlessly together with in-house production of most key components, from batteries to motors and electronics, said Bill Russo, founder and CEO of the Shanghai-based consultancy Automobility Limited.

China's hyperactive delivery industry, particularly urban freight trucks, has been

SALES SURGE. A driver prepares to plug in his electric truck at a charging station on the outskirts of Beijing. China is replacing its diesel trucks with electric models faster than expected, potentially reshaping global fuel demand and the future of heavy transport. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

an early proving ground for these vehicles, he noted.

In 2021-2023, exports of Chinese heavy-duty trucks including EVs to the Middle East and North Africa grew about 73% annually while shipments to Latin America rose 46%, according to a McKinsey & Company report. The share of electrics is expected to grow, though limited charging infrastructure could pose a challenge.

China's Sany Heavy Industry says it will start exporting its electric trucks to Europe in 2026. It has already exported some electric trucks to the U.S., Asian countries like Thailand and India, and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

In June, Chinese EV maker BYD broke ground in Hungary for an electric truck and bus factory, with an eye toward a mandatory European target of cutting carbon emissions from new trucks by 90% by 2040 compared to 2019 levels.

Prices of zero-emission trucks in Europe must roughly halve to become affordable alternatives to diesel, according to another study in 2024 by McKinsey.

Volvo told The Associated Press that it didn't comment on competitors but welcomed "competition on fair terms," while Scania did not respond.

"Things are shaking up," Daiss said.

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Bamboo scaffolding helped build Hong Kong’s skyline, but a deadly fire may hasten its end

By Elaine Kurtenbach
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — While the exact cause of the deadly inferno that swept across a Hong Kong apartment complex was unknown, questions have been raised about the role of the bamboo scaffolding that enveloped the buildings at the time of the fire.

The blaze, which has left at least 128 dead, has focused attention on the use of the ancient construction technique used for more than 1,000 years.

Bamboo poles lashed together using wire and other strong materials are often found at construction sites in Asia, and the scaffolding is commonly seen around Hong Kong.

In late November, officials said the fire started on the external scaffolding of a 32-story tower, spread to the inside of the building, and then to six other towers, likely aided by windy conditions.

Officials are investigating why the scaffolding and other construction materials used in renovations to the exteriors of the buildings caught fire.

Bamboo is a fast-growing plant that forms tall, hollow stalks with strong fibers. The poles, harvested from three-year-old plants, are lightweight, inexpensive, and easy to transport. They’re seen as easier to install and remove from the kinds of tight spaces found in a city as densely populated as Hong Kong.

In the case of an accident, such as a collapse, they are seen as less dangerous than heavy metal poles. Bamboo scaffolding is also used for temporary structures, such as outdoor theaters.

The bamboo poles are usually imported from Zhaoxing, in neighboring Guangdong province, or from the nearby southern provinces of Guangxi or Guilin.

But Hong Kong is moving toward phasing out use of bamboo.

A memo from Hong Kong’s development secretary in March noted that the city planned to “drive a wider adoption of metal scaffolding in public building works



progressively.”

According to the Construction Industry Council, 2,500 bamboo scaffolders are registered in Hong Kong. Bamboo scaffolding-related accidents have claimed 23 lives since 2018.

City leader John Lee said officials have met with industry representatives to discuss a switch to metal scaffolding.

Eric Chan, the chief secretary for

administration, acknowledged traditional bamboo scaffolding is inferior to metal for fire safety. “For safety reasons, the government believes that a complete switch to metal scaffolding should be implemented in suitable working environments,” he said.

Ehsan Noroozinejad, a professor at Western Sydney University’s Urban Transformations Research Centre, said

FATAL FIRE. Firefighters work to extinguish a fire that broke out at Wang Fuk Court, a residential estate in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong’s New Territories, on November 27, 2025. While the exact cause of the deadly inferno that swept across the Hong Kong apartment complex was unknown, questions have been raised about the role of the bamboo scaffolding that enveloped the buildings at the time of the fire. In the bottom photo, a fire burns at Wang Fuk Court. (AP Photos/Chan Long Hei)

steel or aluminum scaffolding is non-combustible, stronger, and lasts longer, though it is heavier, slower to set up, and costs more.

“For high-risk, occupied towers, metal is the safer baseline,” Noroozinejad said. “If bamboo is used, it must come with strict fire and inspection controls.”

In the case of the blaze that started last month at the high-rise residential complex in the suburban Tai Po district, officials have pointed to flammable construction materials such as plastic netting and plastic foam panels used as window coverings as other potential factors in the rapid spread of the fire.

Police arrested three men — the directors and an engineering consultant of a construction company — on suspicion of manslaughter. Authorities said they suspected some materials on the exterior walls of the high-rise buildings did not meet fire resistance standards, allowing the unusually fast spread of the fire.

It’s clear that a large share, but not all, of the bamboo that had encased the buildings as they underwent renovations was incinerated.

“This incident is full of lessons,” Devansh Gulati, founder of the fire safety firm Greenberg Engineering, told The Associated Press. He said “just by chance, the wrong conditions combined” in Hong Kong allowing the bamboo scaffolding to become fuel for the fire.

Whatever the outcome of the investigation into what caused the fire, the days of using bamboo in Hong Kong appear numbered.

AP journalist Anton Delgado in Bangkok contributed to this report.

WHO declares end of Indonesia’s polio outbreak following yearslong vaccination campaign

By Niniek Karmini
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Indonesia’s polio outbreak officially over, following nearly three years of intensive response efforts, according to officials.

Indonesia has remained largely polio-free as the highly contagious disease was declared eliminated in the country in 2014. But eight years later, an outbreak emerged in the country’s conservative Aceh province, prompted by a dangerous combination of consistently low routine immunization and unhealthy environmental conditions. In 2021, only 50.9% of infants born in Aceh received a polio vaccination.

Officials say that polio immunization rates in Aceh are well behind the rest of the country, with efforts hampered by widespread disinformation that the vaccine is incompatible with religious beliefs, among other things. The government has also been prioritizing COVID-19 vaccinations since they became available.

Over the next two years, cases appeared in the provinces of Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, North Maluku, Central Papua, Highland Papua, and



South Papua, prompting the mass immunization and information drive. Nearly 60 million additional doses of polio vaccine were administered to children during the response.

The last confirmed polio case was in South Papua province in June 2024. Since then, no polio has been detected in children or in the environment, prompting WHO to declare the outbreak over.

In a joint announcement, Indonesian Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin credited the success to “the dedication of health workers and the commitment of parents and communities,” while WHO’s Western Pacific Regional director Saia Ma’u Piukala called the achievement “a critical step toward global eradication,” while calling for continued vigilance.

VACCINE EFFICACY. A medical worker gives a vaccine to a boy during a polio immunization campaign at Sigli Town Square in Pidie, Aceh province, Indonesia, in this November 28, 2022 file photo. (AP Photo/Riska Munawarah, File)

“I urge all our 38 countries and areas to remain vigilant. One day polio will be just a memory. Until then, we vaccinate,” Piukala said.

With the end of the polio outbreak, Sadikin vowed to keep Indonesia polio-free through strengthening routine immunization and enhancing surveillance, cross-sectoral collaboration, and community support.

“Every child deserves protection,” he said. “We cannot be complacent, however. The risk of polio remains, especially with the gaps in immunization coverage in several provinces in Indonesia.”

Indonesia’s response included two rounds of nationwide immunization using novel oral polio vaccine type 2 and improved routine coverage. The second dose of inactivated polio vaccine rose from 1.9 million children or 63% in 2023 to 3.2 million children or 73% last year, aided by the introduction of a hexavalent vaccine which is expected to reduce the number of injections children receive and accelerate the development of immunity to various diseases.

“This shows what is possible when communities, health workers, and partners unite,” said UNICEF Indonesia representative Maniza Zaman, “We must keep up the momentum, so every child receives the immunization they need to grow up healthy and free from polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases.”

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“King of K-pop” Lee Soo Man on his career, a global industry, and what’s next

By Juwon Park
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Lee Soo Man resisted the title at first. “King of K-pop” sounded too brash, too nightclub-esque — like something you’d see on a neon sign in Itaewon, a nightlife neighborhood in the South Korean capital of Seoul once popular with U.S. soldiers and foreign visitors. “I asked them, ‘Couldn’t it be Father of K-pop?’” the 73-year-old recalled during a recent interview with The Associated Press.

He was discussing the title of Amazon Prime’s documentary about his career. The producers insisted the bolder moniker would resonate better with American audiences. After some back-and-forth, Lee relented. “I had to follow their decision.”

The compromise speaks to Lee’s pragmatic approach to breaking South Korean acts into the American mainstream — a three-decade quest that often required him to bend but never break his vision. Now, as the founder of SM Entertainment and widely credited as the architect of K-pop’s global expansion, Lee was inducted into the Asian Hall of Fame alongside basketball legend Yao Ming, Olympic figure skater Michelle Kwan, and rock icon Yoshiki, among others, in November.

Lee remains a prominent but controversial figure in K-pop history. His label pioneered the industry’s intensive training system, recruiting performers as young as elementary school age and putting them through years of rigorous preparation. Some of his artists have challenged their contracts as unfair, sparking broader debates about industry practices.

The recognition arrives as Lee reemerges into the spotlight after a contentious, high-profile departure from the agency he founded in 1995 — a management battle that included a public feud with his nephew-in-law and a bidding war over his shares. He’s been keeping busy since, debuting a new band, A2O MAY, in both China and the U.S. He’s also investing in a boutique Chinese firm’s high-tech production technologies.

Born in South Korea, Lee studied computer engineering in the U.S. for his master’s degree. That technical background would later inform his approach to everything from visualization and cutting-edge production technologies — he said he’s been rewatching *The Matrix* to revisit filming techniques — to pioneering elaborate “worldviews” and virtual avatars for his K-pop bands.

For Lee, the Hall of Fame honor “confirms that K-pop has become a genre that the mainstream is now paying attention to” — an acceptance that came after costly lessons and years of trial and error.

When America wasn’t ready for K-pop
Lee invested about \$5 million in BoA’s 2009 American

Mount Semeru erupts, blanketing villages with ash and prompting evacuations

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia’s Mount Semeru, the highest peak on Java island, erupted in November, blanketing several villages with falling ash, prompting evacuations and leading authorities to raise the alert to the highest level.

Mount Semeru in East Java province unleashed searing clouds of hot ash and a mixture of rock, lava, and gas that travelled about 4.3 miles down its slopes several times from midday to dusk, while a thick column of hot clouds rose 1.2 miles into the air, Indonesia’s Geology Agency said in a statement.

The eruptions that unfolded throughout the day forced authorities to raise the volcano’s alert level twice, from the third-highest level to the highest, the agency said. No casualties have been reported.

More than 300 residents in the three villages most at risk in the district of Lumajang were evacuated to government shelters, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari.

He said increased activity of the volcano in the afternoon prompted authorities to widen the danger zone to 5 miles from the crater. People were advised to keep away from an area along the Besuk Kobokan River, which was the path of the lava flow as searing gas flowed down Semeru’s slopes.

Videos on social media showed a dense cloud of ash sweeping through a forested valley to a river beneath a bridge. Residents, some with faces smeared with volcanic dust and rain, fled to temporary shelters or left for other safe areas.

Local media reported that authorities were struggling to rescue about 178 people stranded on the 12,060-foot mountain at the Ranu Kumbolo monitoring post. The group included 137 climbers, 15 porters, 7 guides, and 6 tourism officials, according to an official with the Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park, TNBTS.



KING OF K-POP. Producer Lee Soo Man, known as the “King of K-pop,” arrives at the Asian Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at The Biltmore Los Angeles in Los Angeles on November 1, 2025. In the bottom photo, Lee, third from left, and members of SuperM, from left, Ten, Baekhyun, Taeyong, Kai, Taemin, Mark, and Lucas, sit in the audience to watch the premiere of the music video for their song “Jopping” during a media conference at Capitol Studios in Los Angeles, in this October 3, 2019 file photo. (Photos by Richard Shotwell/Invision/AP, File)

debut with “Eat You Up,” one of the first songs by a South Korean artist to be primarily written and produced by western producers — a bold early attempt to bring K-pop into the U.S. mainstream. But with few widely recognized Asian artists in American pop culture at the time, the market wasn’t ready. After nearly two years, BoA — already a megastar in Korea and Japan — decided to return home. The experience, Lee has said, left him with lasting regrets.

“When I asked the songwriter(s) to revise ‘Eat You Up,’ they refused,” Lee recalled. “If we had changed it, I believe it would have achieved much better results.”

Sourcing the world’s best songs for K-pop
That setback taught Lee that K-pop needed to source global talent while maintaining creative control to adapt songs for the worldwide market. His quest for the perfect tracks took him worldwide.

Continued on page 13



“They are currently safe at Ranu Kumbolo monitoring post,” Endrip Wahyutama, a TNBTS spokesperson, had said in video statement, adding that the post is located 2.7 miles from the crater on the northern slope of the mountain, which is not in the path of the hot cloud flow that was observed moving to the south-southeast. Bad weather and rain forced them to spend the night there, he said.

Semeru, also known as Mahameru, has erupted numerous times in the past 200 years. Still, as is the case with many of the 129 active volcanoes in Indonesia, tens of thousands of people continue to live on its fertile slopes.

Semeru’s last major eruption was in December 2021 when it left 51 people dead and several hundred others burned in villages that were buried in layers of mud. The eruption forced the evacuation of more than 10,000 people. The government moved about 2,970 houses out of the danger zone.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 280 million people, sits along the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” a horseshoe-shaped series of fault lines, and is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity.

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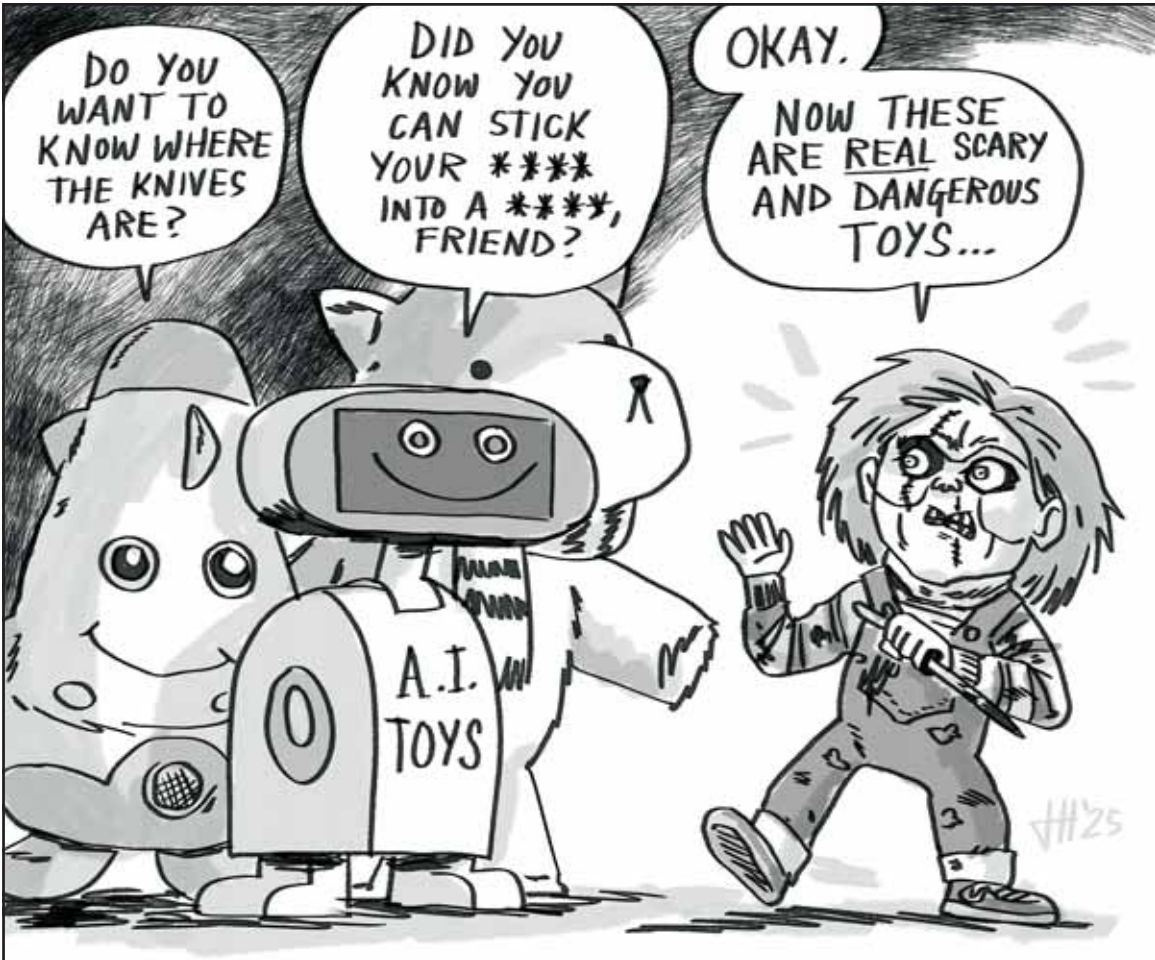
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■ *Wayne Chan*



My way to rice to the occasion

A cartoon drawing of a rice bag with a face and legs, labeled "PEARL RICE". The bag has a handle at the top and a small wheel at the bottom. The text "PEARL RICE" is written on the front. The drawing is signed "Wayne Chan" in the bottom right corner.

I love my wife.
*Humor writer Wayne Chan lives in the San Diego area;
 cartoonist Wayne Chan is based in the Bay Area.*

Opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of this publication.

Advocacy groups urge parents to avoid AI toys this holiday season

By Barbara Ortutay and Matt O'Brien
AP Technology Writers

They're cute, even cuddly, and promise learning and companionship — but artificial intelligence toys are not safe for kids, according to children's and consumer advocacy groups urging parents not to buy them during the holiday season.

These toys, marketed to kids as young as 2 years old, are generally powered by AI models that have already been shown to harm children and teenagers, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, according to an advisory published by the children's advocacy group Fairplay and signed by more than 150 organizations and individual experts such as child psychiatrists and educators.

"The serious harms that AI chatbots have inflicted on children are well-documented, including fostering obsessive use, having explicit sexual conversations, and encouraging unsafe behaviors, violence against others, and self-harm," Fairplay said.

AI toys, made by companies including Curio Interactive and Keyi Technologies, are often marketed as educational, but Fairplay says they can displace important creative and learning activities. They promise friendship but disrupt children's relationships and resilience, the group said.

"What's different about young children is that their brains are being wired for the first time and developmentally it is natural for them to be trustful, for them to seek relationships with kind and friendly characters," said Rachel Franz, director of Fairplay's Young Children Thrive Offline Program. Because of this, she added, the trust young children are placing in these toys can exacerbate the types of harms older children are already experiencing with AI chatbots.

A separate report by Common Sense Media and psychiatrists at Stanford University's medical school warned teenagers against using popular AI chatbots as therapists.

Fairplay, a 25-year-old organization formerly known as the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, has been warning about AI toys for years. They just weren't as advanced as they are today. A decade ago, during an emerging fad of internet-connected toys and AI speech recognition, the group helped lead a



backlash against Mattel's talking Hello Barbie doll that it said was recording and analyzing children's conversations.

This time, though AI toys are mostly sold online and more popular in Asia than elsewhere, Franz said some have started to appear on store shelves in the U.S. and more could be on the way.

"Everything has been released with no regulation and no research, so it gives us extra pause when all of a sudden we see more and more manufacturers, including Mattel, who recently partnered with OpenAI, potentially putting out these products," Franz said.

It's the second big seasonal warning against AI toys since consumer advocates at U.S. PIRG called out the trend in its annual "Trouble in Toyland" report that typically looks at a range of product hazards, such as high-powered magnets and button-sized batteries that young children can swallow. This year, the organization tested four toys that use AI chatbots.

"We found some of these toys will talk in-depth about sexually explicit topics, will offer advice on where a child can find matches or knives, act dismayed when you say you have to leave, and have limited or no parental controls," the report said. One of the toys, a teddy bear made by Singapore-based FoloToy, was later withdrawn, its CEO told CNN.

Dr. Dana Suskind, a pediatric surgeon and social scientist who studies early brain development, said young children don't have the conceptual tools to understand what an AI companion is. While kids have

always bonded with toys through imaginative play, when they do this they use their imagination to create both sides of a pretend conversation, "practicing creativity, language, and problem-solving," she said.

"An AI toy collapses that work. It answers instantly, smoothly, and often better than a human would. We don't yet know the developmental consequences of outsourcing that imaginative labor to an artificial agent — but it's very plausible that it undercuts the kind of creativity and executive function that traditional pretend play builds," Suskind said.

Beijing-based Keyi, maker of an AI "petbot" called Loona, didn't return requests for comment, but other AI toymakers sought to highlight their child safety protections.

California-based Curio Interactive makes stuffed toys, like Gabbo and rocket-shaped Grok, that have been promoted by the pop singer Grimes. The company said it has "meticulously designed" guardrails to protect children and the company encourages parents to "monitor conversations, track insights, and choose the controls that work best for their family."

In response to the earlier PIRG findings, Curio said it is "actively working with our team to address any concerns, while continuously overseeing content and interactions to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for children."

Another company, Miko, based in Mumbai, India, said it uses its own conversational AI model rather than

CUTE BUT CONCERNING. Pictured are artificial intelligence-powered toys tested by consumer advocates at PIRG. Artificial intelligence toys are not safe for kids, according to children's and consumer advocacy groups urging parents not to buy them during the holiday season. "Kids need lots of real human interaction. Play should support that, not take its place. The biggest thing to consider isn't only what the toy does; it's what it replaces. A simple block set or a teddy bear that doesn't talk back forces a child to invent stories, experiment, and work through problems," said Dr. Dana Suskind, a pediatric surgeon and social scientist who studies early brain development. (Rory Erlich/The Public Interest Network via AP)

relying on general large language model systems such as ChatGPT in order to make its product — an interactive AI robot — safe for children.

"We are always expanding our internal testing, strengthening our filters, and introducing new capabilities that detect and block sensitive or unexpected topics," said CEO Sneh Vaswani. "These new features complement our existing controls that allow parents and caregivers to identify specific topics they'd like to restrict from conversation. We will continue to invest in setting the highest standards for safe, secure, and responsible AI integration for Miko products."

Miko's products are sold by major retailers such as Walmart and Costco and have been promoted by the families of social media "kidfluencers" whose YouTube videos have millions of views. On its website, it markets its robots as "Artificial Intelligence. Genuine friendship."

Ritvik Sharma, the company's senior vice president of growth, said Miko actually "encourages kids to interact more with their friends, to interact more with the peers, with the family members, etc. It's not made for them to feel attached to the device only."

Still, Suskind and children's advocates say analog toys are a better bet for the holidays.

"Kids need lots of real human interaction. Play should support that, not take its place. The biggest thing to consider isn't only what the toy does; it's what it replaces. A simple block set or a teddy bear that doesn't talk back forces a child to invent stories, experiment, and work through problems. AI toys often do that thinking for them," she said. "Here's the brutal irony: when parents ask me how to prepare their child for an AI world, unlimited AI access is actually the worst preparation possible."

This hidden electricity drain can have a massive impact

By Aya Diab
The Associated Press

The lights are off, the house is quiet, and nothing seems to be running. But electricity is silently flowing through the plugs in your home. This hidden drain is known as phantom energy.

Also called vampire energy, the wasted electricity comes from leaving devices plugged in when they're not in use. That could range from household items such as phone chargers and microwaves to TVs and gaming consoles.

This wasted electricity accounts for about 5% to 10% of home energy use, depending on factors like the age of the equipment, according to Alexis Abramson, dean of the Columbia Climate School.

"Phantom energy depends on ... what kind of systems you have and how much they've improved over time," said Abramson.

For example, televisions that are connected to the internet and have smart wake features that allow them to interact with phones and other devices can consume up to 40 watts of energy during the hours of the day that the TV would

normally be off, according to Matt Malinowski, director of the buildings program at the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. That's almost 40 times as much as a regular television.

"The good news is there have been new, renewed efforts to tackle this," said Malinowski.

He said advocates and manufacturers have come up with a voluntary agreement seeking to reduce the amount of energy smart televisions use when they're in standby mode.

Phantom energy contributes to climate change because power drawn by unused devices can increase demand for electricity from sources that release planet-warming emissions. Aidan Charron, associate director of Global Earth Day, said that while the amount may seem small when a person looks at their individual utility bill, the environmental toll of phantom energy is significant when multiplied over homes across the country.

"Just take a little step of unplugging the things that you're not using," said Charron. "It will save you money and it'll save emissions in the long run."

What you can do

Some of the main culprits when it comes to draining energy are appliances that are constantly connected to electricity, such as those with a clock.

"Do you really need your microwave to tell you the time, or can you unplug your microwave when you're not using it?" said Charron.

While unplugging devices may seem burdensome, it significantly contributes to reducing emissions.

Charron recommends starting with small steps like unplugging chargers for phones and other devices once the battery is fully charged. The next step is moving to other appliances such as unplugging an

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Department of Consumer & Business Services



Small Business Ombudsman: What we do

Our office provides free confidential assistance to businesses that have questions about workers' compensation insurance. We provide information about whether you need workers' compensation insurance, how to buy it, and how much it may cost. Workers' compensation is a complex system and we can help you navigate the process. Common questions we receive are: Why is the premium so high? What is a classification? What is an experience modification? Our office can explain the terms and help you make sure you are paying the right premium amount. We have assisted thousands of Oregon-based businesses with issues relating to audits, classifications, experience modifications, coverage, market availability, claims, laws, and rules.

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oregon.gov/DCBS/SBO

Buddhist monks resume 2,300-mile Walk for Peace after accident near Houston

By **Juan A. Lozano**
The Associated Press

HOUSTON — A group of Buddhist monks in the middle of a 2,300-mile walk across the U.S. to promote peace planned to resume their journey after two of them were injured during a traffic accident near Houston, a spokesperson for the group said.

The collection of about two dozen monks began their walk on October 26 from Fort Worth, Texas, to “raise awareness of peace, loving kindness, and compassion across America and the world,” according to the group, Walk for Peace. The monks planned to travel through 10 states before reaching Washington, D.C.

So far, the monks have visited various Texas cities on their trek, including Austin and Houston, often walking along roads and highways while being escorted by law enforcement or by a vehicle trailing behind them, said Long Si Dong, a spokesperson for the group. The monks are being accompanied on their journey by their dog Aloka.

At around 6:13pm on November 19, the monks were walking along the side of U.S. Highway 90 near Dayton, Texas, about 40 miles northeast of Houston, when their escort vehicle, which had its hazard lights on, was hit by a truck, said Dayton interim police chief Shane Burleigh.

The truck “didn’t notice how slow the vehicle was going, tried to make an evasive maneuver to drive around the vehicle, and didn’t do it in time,” Burleigh said. “It struck the escort vehicle in the rear left, pushed the escort into two of the monks.”

One of the monks has “substantial leg injuries” and was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Houston, Burleigh said. The other monk with less serious injuries was



WALK FOR PEACE. People watch as Buddhist monks from the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana Center in Fort Worth, Texas, arrive for a welcome ceremony at the Hong Kong City Mall in Houston, Texas. The monks are undertaking a 2,300-mile pilgrimage called the Walk for Peace. (Melissa Phillip/Houston Chronicle via AP)

have a series of surgeries to heal a broken bone, but his prognosis for recovery was good. The group said the monk’s surgery went well.

“He’s in good spirits. He’s giving us thumbs-up,” the spokeswoman said. The condition of the other monk was not immediately known.

The monks, who camped overnight near Dayton, planned to resume their walk “with steadfast determination,” Walk for Peace said.

“We kindly ask everyone to continue keeping the monks in your thoughts and prayers as healing begins and the journey toward peace continues,” the group said in a post on Facebook.

After the accident, the monks do not plan to change how they conduct their walk, which takes place along highways but also through open fields, Dong said. Walk for Peace plans to continue working with local law enforcement in the areas they travel through to ensure the safety of the monks, he said.

“Right now, everything is still as planned,” Dong said.

The driver of the truck that hit the monk’s escort vehicle is cooperating with the investigation, which is still ongoing, Burleigh said.

“Right now, we’re looking at this as driver inattention,” said Burleigh, who added that police will determine at the end of the investigation if any charges will be filed.



taken by ambulance to another hospital in suburban Houston.

In a video posted on Walk for Peace’s Facebook page, an unidentified spokeswoman for the group said the most seriously injured monk was expected to

This hidden electricity drain can have a massive impact

Continued from page 7

unused lamp.

If unplugging sounds too hard, regularly checking your settings and disabling any extra feature you’re not using that could be draining energy help, too. For example, smart televisions often have optional features that can be turned off so the television isn’t listening for signals from

other devices while in standby mode.

“If you’re not using it, then you’re getting no benefit, yet you’re paying the price and increased the energy use,” said Malinowski.

How individual actions can make a difference

Individuals also tend to take more sustainable actions, such as unplugging devices, once they learn what they can do to decrease their household emissions efficiently. Those actions could contribute to reducing U.S. emissions by about 20% per year, which equals about 450 tons of carbon dioxide, according to Jonathan Gilligan, an earth and environmental science professor at Vanderbilt University.

The choices individuals take in their daily lives all add up, Gilligan said, mainly because of how much the U.S. population contributes to direct greenhouse gas emissions.



VAMPIRE ENERGY. Leaving devices plugged in wastes electricity through phantom energy, the power consumed even when appliances are off. This hidden drain increases household costs and contributes to emissions. Small consistent changes at home can make a significant impact. A small step that can be taken is to utilize single or multi-plug power strips with individual on-off switches to easily turn off the monitors, printers, and other accessories on home or office computer stations or television and gaming systems. (AP Photo/Joshua A. Bickel)

what they tend to overlook is how they influence others around them by choosing to live a more sustainable life.

The impact may be much stronger than a lot of people realize, Gilligan said.

The Associated Press’ climate and environmental coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for content.

“The question becomes, what can we do to try to address this?” said Gilligan. “Phantom power is one part of this.”

The more individuals decrease their footprint, the more likely it is that others will follow, too, and eventually, those actions may turn to societal norms, according to Gilligan, because individuals don’t want to feel like they’re being irresponsible.

“This is a place where psychologists find that this effect is real. If people see that other people are doing actions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, they want to do that,” said Gilligan.

When it comes to daily choices, individuals may think what they’re doing isn’t really making a big difference. But

Refugee groups worry about backlash after shooting of National Guard soldiers in D.C.

By **Martha Bellisle**
The Associated Press

SEATTLE — People who work with refugees are worried that those who fled dangerous situations to start again in America will face backlash after authorities say an Afghan national shot two National Guard soldiers last month, killing one of them.

Many Afghans living in the U.S. are afraid to leave their houses, fearing they’ll be swept up by immigration officials or attacked with hate speech, said Shawn VanDiver, president of the San Diego-based group #AfghanEvac, a group that helps resettle Afghans who assisted the U.S. during the two-decade war.

“They’re terrified. It’s insane,” VanDiver told The

Associated Press. “People are acting xenophobic because of one deranged man. He doesn’t represent all Afghans. He represents himself.”

Officials say Rahmanullah Lakanwal, 29, drove from his home in Bellingham, Washington, to the nation’s capital where he shot two West Virginia National Guard members deployed in Washington, D.C.

President Donald Trump announced that Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, 20, had died from her injuries. Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, 24, remained hospitalized in critical condition.

Lakanwal had worked in a special CIA-backed Afghan Army unit before emigrating from Afghanistan, according

Continued on page 14

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	9			6				
		5	2					8
		2	7		4	1	5	
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	7	1	4		8	6		
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Difficulty level: Easy

#96528

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 #67471 (Hard)

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

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

Power-hitting infielder Munetaka Murakami has entered the MLB posting system

NEW YORK (AP) — Power-hitting Japanese corner infielder Munetaka Murakami in early November entered Major League Baseball’s posting system and will be available to teams to sign as a free agent through December 22.

Murakami, who turns 26 on February 2, was the Central Leagues MVP in 2021 and ’22 with the Yakult Swallows and is a four-time All-Star.

He batted .273 with 22 homers and 47 Runs Batted In (RBI) this season, limited to 56 games by an oblique injury. He struck out 64 times.

Murakami hit 56 homers in 2022 to break Sadaharu Oh’s record for a Japan-born player in Nippon Professional Baseball while becoming the youngest player to earn Japan’s Triple Crown. He topped 30 homers in four straight years before an injury-interrupted season in 2023.

He has a .270 career average with 246 homers, 647 RBI, and 977 strikeouts in 892 games over eight Central League seasons, all with the Swallows.

After playing primarily at first base in 2019 and 2020, he has spent most of his time since at third.

At the 2023 World Baseball Classic, Murakami hit a ninth-inning walk-off double off Giovanny Gallegos that scored Shohei Ohtani and Masataka Yoshida to give Japan a 6-5 semifinal win over Mexico. The following day in the championship game, Murakami hit a tying home run off Merrill Kelly in the second inning and Japan went on to beat the United States 3-2.

Also entering the MLB posting system, during the third week in November, were Japanese infielder Kazuma Okamoto and pitcher Kona Takahashi, who will be available for teams to sign as free agents through January 4, as well as right-hander Tatsuya Imai, who can sign through January 2.

Kazuma Okamoto

Okamoto, 29, hit .327 with 15 homers and 49 RBI in 69 games this year for the



AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki, File



AP Photo/Hiro Komae, File

Central League’s Yomiuri Giants. He injured his left elbow while trying to catch a throw at first base on May 6 when he collided with the Hanshin Tigers’ Takumu Nakano, an injury that sidelined Okamoto until August 16.

A six-time All-Star, Okamoto has a .277

average with 248 homers and 717 RBI in 11 Japanese big league seasons, leading the Central League in home runs in 2020, 2021, and 2023. He homered off Colorado’s Kyle Freeland to help Japan beat the U.S. 3-2 in the 2023 World Baseball Classic final.

NIPPON PLAYERS. Munetaka Murakami of Japan hits a home run during the gold medal baseball game against the United States at the pandemic-delayed 2020 Summer Olympics in Yokohama, Japan, on August 7, 2021. Several Nippon Professional Baseball players have entered Major League Baseball’s posting system and will be available to teams to sign as a free agent for 45 days. In the bottom photo, Kazuma Okamoto of the Yomiuri Giants plays in a 2025 spring training baseball game against the Los Angeles Dodgers in Tokyo, Japan.

Kona Takahashi

Takahashi, a right-hander who turns 29 on February 3, was 8-9 with a 3.04 ERA this year for the Pacific League’s Seibu Lions, striking out 88 and walking 41 in 148 innings. He had gone 0-11 with a 3.87 ERA in 2024 after compiling a 22-16 record in the prior two seasons.

Takahashi is 73-77 with a 3.39 ERA in 11 seasons with the Lions.

Tatsuya Imai

Japanese pitcher Tatsuya Imai is likely to move to Major League Baseball after the Pacific League’s Seibu Lions said he will be made available to teams through the posting process. A 27-year-old right-hander, Imai was 10-5 with a 1.92 ERA this season, striking out 178 in 163 2/3 innings.

A three-time All-Star, he pitched eight innings of a combined no-hitter against Fukuoka on April 18. Imai struck out 17 against Yokohama on June 17, breaking Daisuke Matsuzaka’s prior team record of 16 from 2004. Imai is 58-45 with a 3.15 ERA in eight seasons with Seibu, striking out 907 in 963 2/3 innings.

Under MLB’s posting agreement with NPB, a player may be posted from November 1 until December 15 and a posted player has 45 days to reach an agreement with an MLB team.

The posting fee is 20% of the first \$25 million of a major league contract, including earned bonuses and options. The percentage drops to 17.5% of the next \$25 million, and 15% of any amount over \$50 million. There is also a supplemental fee of 15% of any earned bonuses, salary escalators, and exercised options.

Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki nears the pinnacle of Japan’s national sport

By Stephen Wade
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki is only 21 but has moved just one step from the top rank of Japan’s national sport.

In an elaborate ceremony in late November, he was promoted by the Japan Sumo Association to the rank of ozeki, the rung just below the top.

Only two now hold the top rank of yokozuna — grand champion in English: Japanese Onosato and Mongolia-born Hoshoryu.

“I’m happy but I feel more strongly about working harder from now on,” Aonishiki said after the ceremony. “There is a higher rank, and that’s my next goal.”

Sumo’s new rising star, who wrestles under the ring name of Aonishiki Arata, was born Danilo Yavhushyshyn in west central Ukraine and has identified his hometown as Vinnytsia.

He moved to Japan after Russia invaded Ukraine just over 3 1/2 years ago, the byproduct of a friendship he had made a few years earlier with a Japanese wrestler at a tournament.

Japanese media identifies him as being the quickest — he’s wrestled only 14 tournaments — to reach the ozeki rank since 1958 when the present tournament scheduling system was installed.

The promotion was inevitable after he won a prestigious tournament in western Japan. He defeated Hoshoryu in

the deciding match.

He explained earlier that his parents fled to Germany after the invasion and said they are living safely. He said he called them after the big tournament and praised them for allowing him to pursue his interests. He said his mother cried on the phone call. He was told his father did too, but tried to hide it.

“They never scolded me even when I didn’t do well in studies, as they believed in letting me do what I liked to do,” he said.

Aonishiki is small by sumo standards. He weighs in the 125 to 135 kilogram range (between 275 to 300 pounds). This is slight in sumo — in the range of an NFL lineman —

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What happens when pumpkin pie meets deep-dish pizza?

By Stacey Mei Yan Fong
The Associated Press

Every time I am feeling a little too much, or sometimes not enough, I bake a pie. I bake a pie when I celebrate something, make a new friend, figure out something hard, go on an inspiring trip, and, most of all, when I am trying to create a feeling of home.

For my project-turned-cookbook, *50 Pies, 50 States*, I decided to learn about America by creating a pie for each state that said something about its people and included meaningful regional ingredients.

For pumpkin pie, one state stood out: Illinois. About 85% of canned pumpkin consumed in the United States comes from Illinois, and pumpkin pie is the official state pie.

But I couldn't just make a regular ol' pumpkin pie! I



had to think outside the box. Then it hit me: I could make the love child of a pumpkin pie and a deep-dish pizza,

SKY-HIGH PIE. This image released by Voracious shows a slice of Deep-Dish Pumpkin Pie. Author Stacey Mei Yan Fong thought of the thick dessert while working on *50 Pies, 50 States*, a project-turned-cookbook. (Alanna Hale/Voracious via AP)

which is thick and baked in a skillet and requires a fork and knife to eat 'cause it's too dang hard to pick up! Like one of Chicago's skyscrapers, this deep-dish pumpkin pie was an engineering feat.

The deep-dish crust is the hardest part of the recipe. I always egg-wash the crust. For the egg wash, I combine one whole large egg, one large yolk, and 2 tablespoons milk or water (whichever you have on hand) in a quart container, and blend with an immersion blender or whisk until smooth. This has been the recipe that has given me the best golden brown on my bakes. Don't be stressed, chill your dough, and take your time! Pro Tip: Make your filling a day in advance; this will help guarantee a thicker set custard filling.

Deep-Dish Pumpkin Pie

Makes one 9-inch pie

Start to finish: 6 hours (1 hour active)

Special equipment

9-inch springform pan that is at least 2 1/2 inches deep
Parchment paper

Crust

Store-bought or homemade pie dough (preferably made with all butter; and enough for a double crusted pie); do not separate into two portions.
Egg wash

Pumpkin filling

1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 teaspoons ground ginger
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 (15-ounce) cans of pumpkin purée (I prefer Libby's)
2 1/2 cups heavy cream
6 large eggs, beaten

MAKE THE FILLING: In a medium bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients: sugars, cornstarch, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, salt, and pepper. In a separate medium bowl, mix the pumpkin, cream, and eggs together until well incorporated. Mix in the dry ingredients and make sure everything is well incorporated. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or up to overnight.

BLIND BAKE THE CRUST: Preheat the oven to 425° Fahrenheit. Roll out the double portion of dough so that there will be at least a 1-inch overhang beyond the edge of the springform pan. Spray the 9-inch springform pan liberally with nonstick cooking spray. Line the bottom with parchment paper. Fit the rolled-out crust in the pan, making sure to push the dough into all corners on the bottom and that all the sides are covered. Leave about an inch of dough hanging over the edge of the pan. Freeze for one hour. Prick the dough with a fork on the base and sides. Line the entire crust with foil, making sure it is tight around the edges. Fill to the brim with pie weights or beans. Bake for 30 minutes, until the crust is lightly golden at the edges. Let the crust cool completely with the weights still in the crust; it may take 2 to 3 hours to cool completely.

FILL AND BAKE THE PIE: Preheat the oven to 400° F. Remove the foil and weights from the baked crust and brush the entire crust with egg wash to seal. Keep the crust in the springform pan. Place it on a baking sheet and fill with the chilled pumpkin filling. Bake the pie on the center rack, rotating the baking sheet 90 degrees every 15 minutes to make sure the filling is cooking evenly, for 45 to 50 minutes, until the center has a slight jiggle but is mostly set. Check the edge of the crust at 30 minutes; if it is getting too brown, tent with foil. Let the pie cool for at least four hours before removing from the springform pan. Serve with whipped cream if desired. Best enjoyed while watching *The Last Dance* documentary series about Michael Jordan and the 1997 Chicago Bulls.

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Air pollution levels surge in New Delhi, sparking rare protests

Continued from page 2

who is worried about the state of the situation that we are in with respect to the lack of clean air to breathe,” said protester Meghna, who only gave her first name.

Police later confiscated placards and banners and asked protesters to disperse, saying they did not have permission to demonstrate.

Worsening air quality in the capital sparked outrage from residents suffering from headaches and persistent coughs. Frustration is mounting toward politicians accused of trading blame instead of enforcing policies to combat what has become an annual health emergency.

Home to more than 30 million people, New Delhi and its surrounding region routinely rank among the world's most polluted cities. India has six of the 10 most polluted cities globally, and New Delhi remains the most polluted capital, according to a report from Switzerland-based air quality monitoring database IQAir earlier this year.

Air quality in the city worsens further each winter as farmers burn crop residue in nearby states and cooler

temperatures trap the smoke, which mixes with vehicle and industrial emissions. Toxic particles linger because Delhi's winters are often dry and windless, sometimes pushing pollution levels to 20 times WHO's safe limit.

Authorities have temporarily banned construction, restricted diesel generators, and even tried using cloud seeding to promote rain, but critics say only long-term measures to cut emissions can bring real relief.

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Lidia Bastianich’s recipe for Pumpkin Ravioli, a dish using butternut squash

By The Associated Press

Lidia Bastianich notes that the traditional filling of pumpkin ravioli is simple. Instead of the traditional roasted Mantova squash, she uses butternut here and says it’s a good substitute. She also uses crushed amaretti cookies, breadcrumbs, eggs, and grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano, so the filling is not too sweet. In the northern Italian city of Mantova, they add mostarda di Mantova, a chutney of preserved local fruit in syrup. It’s usually a combination of pears, apricots, and cherries with some mustard powder added, which makes it piquant. Here, Bastianich substitutes golden raisins.

This recipe is reprinted from the 2025 book *Lidia’s The Art of Pasta*:

Pumpkin Ravioli

Serves: 6

Makes 24 to 30 ravioli

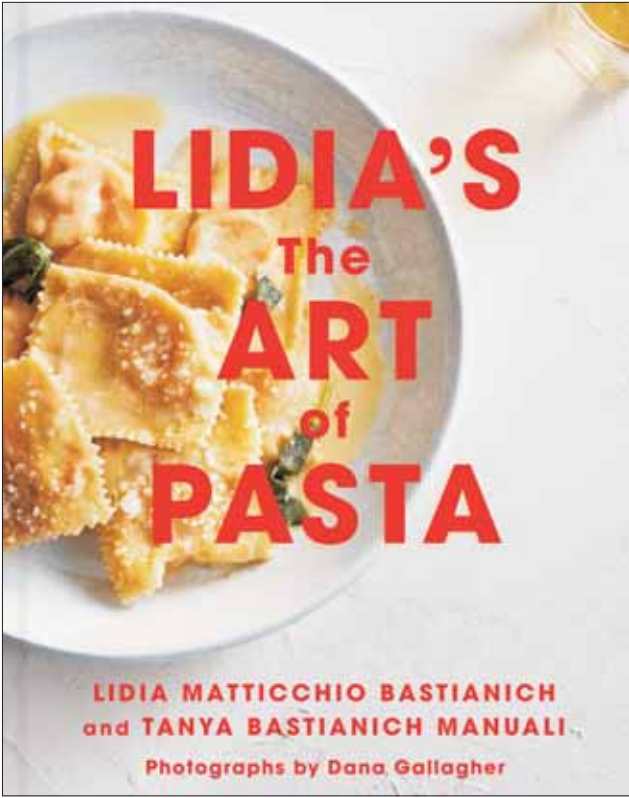
For the Ravioli

- ½ small butternut squash (about 1 pound), split lengthwise, seeds removed
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 1/3 cup golden raisins, coarsely chopped if large
- ½ cup freshly grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano
- ¼ cup fine dry breadcrumbs
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 recipe Fresh Pasta with Just a Few Eggs (recipe follows)
- All-purpose flour, for rolling

For the Sauce

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 10 large fresh sage leaves
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup freshly grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano

1. To make the ravioli, preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit. Put the squash into a baking dish, and drizzle the cut side with the olive oil. Season with 1 teaspoon salt. Turn it over; place it, cut side down, in the baking dish, and add 1 cup water. Cover the dish with foil, and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil, and continue to bake until the squash is completely tender when pierced with a knife, 15 to 20 minutes more. Remove it from the oven, and let it cool.
2. Meanwhile, put the raisins into a small bowl, and add hot water to cover. Let them soak for 10 minutes, then drain them and pat them very dry.
3. When the squash has cooled, scoop the flesh into a large bowl. Mash it well with a potato masher; you should have about 1 heaping cup. Add the drained raisins, grated cheese, breadcrumbs, nutmeg, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Mix well to make a cohesive filling.
4. To make the ravioli, cut the dough into four pieces; work with one piece at a time, and keep the others covered with a damp kitchen towel. Flatten a piece of the dough with your palm, and then roll it through a pasta machine



on the widest setting. Fold the dough like a letter to square it off and roll it through again, putting the wider end through first. Continue to roll it, at progressively narrower settings, always keeping the dough lightly floured, until you’ve created a long strip, as wide as your machine allows, and a little less than an 1/8-inch thick. Repeat with the remaining dough. (If the strips get too long to work with, cut them in half crosswise before proceeding.)

5. Fill a small bowl with water. Lay one strip of dough in front of you with the long side facing you. Drop 1-tablespoon balls of filling at about 1½-inch intervals along the bottom half of the dough strip. Use your finger or a pastry brush to brush water around the sides of the filling, and fold the top of the dough strip over, covering all of the mounds of filling. Press around the filling to seal it in and remove air bubbles. Use a serrated pastry wheel (or a regular one if you don’t have a serrated one) to cut between the mounds, and roll the cutter along the bottom of the strip to cut off any excess dough. Transfer the cut ravioli to floured baking sheets, and repeat with the remaining dough and filling. You should get about 24 to 30 ravioli. They’re ready to cook, but can also be frozen to use later. To freeze, place the baking sheets directly into the freezer. Once the ravioli are frozen solid, transfer them to resealable plastic bags for longer storage.

6. When you are ready to cook, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta.

7. To make the sauce, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Once the butter begins to melt, add the ravioli to the boiling water. Scatter the sage leaves into the melted butter and let them sizzle for a minute to flavor the butter. Ladle in 1 cup pasta-cooking water, and simmer while the ravioli cook. Cook the ravioli until they’re al dente, 3 to 4 minutes, depending on how thick you’ve rolled them. Gently transfer them with a spider to the simmering sauce. Toss gently to coat the ravioli in the sauce, adding a little more pasta water if it seems dry. Season with salt if needed. Remove the skillet from the

PUMPKIN PASTA. This image released by Knopf shows cover art for Lidia’s The Art of Pasta: An Italian Cookbook, by Lidia Bastianich. In her Pumpkin Ravioli recipe, instead of using traditional roasted Mantova squash, she uses butternut squash. (Knopf via AP)

heat. Sprinkle the ravioli with the grated cheese, toss, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The choice of squash is very important. The local variety used in Mantova is large in size and bright orange in color, with a firm and compact pulp and high sugar content. The peel is extremely thick, with green streaks, and it looks puffed out and sectioned like a peeled orange. Besides butternut, which I use here, you can also try blue Hokkaido pumpkin, kabocha squash, or Long Island cheese pumpkins.

Fresh pasta with just a few eggs
(from ravioli ingredients list above)

Makes about 1 pound

Pasta can be made from just flour and water, but eggs can be added to enrich the texture and enhance the color and flavor. In leaner times, just a few eggs were used. My grandmother would use two whole eggs to make pasta for 10 people, whereas in Bologna — “La Grassa” (“The Fat”) — which is known for making the richest and best egg pasta in Italy, only egg yolks and flour are used to make the pasta. Of course, it is golden yellow, rich, and delicious.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 large eggs
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons ice-cold water, plus more as needed

1. To make the dough with a food processor, put the flour and salt into the bowl of a food processor, and process for a few seconds to aerate the mixture. Whisk the eggs, olive oil, and water in a spouted measuring cup to combine them. With the food processor running, pour in the wet ingredients through the feed tube. Process for about 30 to 40 seconds, until a dough forms and gathers on the blade. If the dough does not gather on the blade or process easily, it is too wet or too dry. Feel the dough, then work in more flour or ice water, in small amounts, using the processor or kneading by hand. Turn the dough out on a lightly floured surface, and knead it by hand for a minute, until it’s smooth, soft, and stretchy (but not sticky).

2. To make the dough by hand, combine the flour and salt in a large bowl. Whisk the eggs, olive oil, and water in a spouted measuring cup to combine them. Make a well in the center of the flour, and add the mixed wet ingredients. Mix with a fork until the dough comes together in rough clumps. Flour your hands, and squeeze and knead the dough right in the bowl until you’ve formed a cohesive mass. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface, and knead until it’s smooth, soft, and stretchy (but not sticky), 3 to 6 minutes, depending on the strength and speed of your kneading. Just as with the food-processor dough, adjust with a little bit of flour or water, as needed, at the beginning of the kneading stage.

3. Press the dough into a disk, wrap it well in plastic wrap, and let it rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes. (You can refrigerate the dough for up to a day, or freeze it for a month or more. Defrost it in the refrigerator, and return it to room temperature, before rolling it.)

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KPop Demon Hunters is officially eligible for the Oscars

By Lindsey Bahr
AP Film Writer

KPop *Demon Hunters* is one step closer to another golden moment: The Oscars. The Netflix phenomenon is among 35 film features eligible for the animated feature film category at the 98th Academy Awards.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences last month released lists of all the films eligible for animated, documentary, and international feature prizes at next year's Oscars.

Though *KPop Demon Hunters* made its name on Netflix, it also received a qualifying theatrical run in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in June, which satisfied the film academy's requirements for Oscar consideration. Its U.K. theatrical run was not enough to qualify for the BAFTAs, however.

Other animated titles that qualified for the Oscars animated feature category were Neon's *Arco*, Disney's *Elio* and *Zootopia 2*, GKids' *Little Amélie or the Character of Rain*, Netflix's *In Your Dreams*, and Crunchyroll/Sony's *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba Infinity Castle* and *Chainsaw Man – The Movie: Reze Arc*. Notably, the Chinese blockbuster *Ne Zha 2* was not among the 35 titles listed.

KPop Demon Hunters, which Netflix has said is its most watched film of all time, has amassed more than 541 million hours



CULTURAL PHENOMENON. The top image, released by Netflix, shows characters (L-R) Mira, Rumi, and Zoey in a scene from *KPop Demon Hunters*. *KPop Demon Hunters* is one step closer to another golden moment: The Oscars. The Netflix phenomenon is among 35 film features eligible for the animated feature film category at the 98th Academy Awards, which will air live on ABC on March 15 at 4:00pm. Pictured in the bottom image are characters (L-R) Zoey, Rumi, and Mira. (Netflix via AP)

release over Halloween weekend. Netflix won their first animated feature Oscar in 2022 for *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*.

There are also 201 documentaries and 86 international features eligible, including *Sentimental Value* (Norway), *Sirât* (Spain), *The Secret Agent* (Brazil), *It Was Just an Accident* (France), *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia), and *My Father's Shadow* (United Kingdom). *2000 Meters to Andriivka*, a co-production between The AP and PBS Frontline, is eligible in both categories. Both documentary and international titles will be winnowed to a 10-film shortlist that will be revealed on December 16.

KPop Demon Hunters fans will have to wait for nomination morning on January 22 to hear whether or not they made the cut for animated feature. It's largely expected to be a player in the original song category as well, where *Golden* is among the songs being submitted.

The 98th Oscars will air live on ABC on March 15 at 4:00pm.

“King of K-pop” Lee Soo Man on his career, a global industry, and what’s next

Continued from page 5

“I once heard a song that was so good I couldn’t let it go,” he said, recalling the track that would later become “Dreams Come True” for S.E.S., the late-1990s girl group. “I could’ve bought the license to the song in South Korea, Hong Kong, or Sweden. But I wanted to play it safe, so I found the Finnish address, went to meet the songwriter directly, wrote up a contract, and brought it back.”

At the time, top western songwriters prioritized Japan, the world’s second-largest music market. “European songwriters were willing to sell to Asia,” Lee explained. “That’s how we eventually built a system where music from Europe, Asia, and America could come together.”

Fictional universes that keep fans hooked

That fusion became K-pop’s signature. Lee also helped to pioneer another innovation: elaborate fictional universes, or “worldviews,” for groups like EXO and

aespa — a storytelling approach that would later be adopted across the industry, including by groups like BTS.

The concept emerged during his time in the U.S., where he witnessed MTV transform music into a visual medium. “But we only have three or four minutes,” he said. “How do we express dramatic, cinematic elements in such a short time?”

Lee’s solution was to create ongoing narratives that unfold across multiple music videos and releases — think Marvel’s cinematic universe, but for pop groups.

Unable to attract established screenwriters, Lee developed the storylines himself. The strategy proved prescient: These interconnected narratives give global fans reason to follow groups across comebacks, waiting for the next chapter in an unfolding saga.

Despite K-pop’s global success, Lee remains focused on Asia’s potential. He

envisions South Korea as a creative hub where international talent learns production. “Korea should become the country of producers,” he said.

With the Asia-Pacific region home to more than half the world’s population, he sees it as entertainment’s inevitable future center.

His latest venture with A2O MAY, which operates in both China and the U.S., is testing that vision in one of Asia’s most challenging markets. China’s entertainment landscape has grown increasingly restrictive, with Beijing recently cracking down on “effeminate” male celebrities and youth culture. Asked about potential political risks, Lee dismissed concerns.

“Political risk? I don’t really know much about that,” he said.

He said he aims to elevate South Korea’s cultural influence as a center of production while meeting China’s needs as it seeks to expand its soft power alongside economic dominance.

“Culturally, does China need what we do? I believe they do.”

The documentary also addressed darker aspects of K-pop close to Lee’s heart,

including the suicides of SM Entertainment artists.

He traces the problem to anonymous and malicious online comments that often evade accountability, especially when posted on servers outside South Korea’s jurisdiction, calling it a global issue requiring international cooperation. Lee advocates for worldwide standards on user verification and mediation systems where victims could identify attackers without expensive legal battles.

But Lee resists the media’s focus on K-pop’s problems. “Should we always weigh the dark side equally with the bright side, the future?” he asked. “Media should consider whether K-pop represents more future or more past that holds us back. Rather than just discussing the dark side and dragging us down by clinging to the past, shouldn’t we talk more about the future?”

After more than three decades, Lee’s definition remains straightforward: “K-pop is a new language of communication that transcends barriers. These languages move around naturally — what you can’t stop is culture.”

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Netflix’s new “Last Samurai Standing” pays respect to the original

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — “Last Samurai Standing,” a Netflix series that launched in November, is set in a Japan where the feudal samurai era is about to end.

The hero, Saga Kokushu, played by Junichi Okada, is one of dozens of samurai in a live-or-die survival game to save family, community, and honor. Participants receive wooden tags to wear and add another for each rival they kill. The last man standing collects 100 billion yen (\$650 million).

Directed by Michihito Fujii, whose credits include *The Journalist*, about a fearless reporter, and *A Family*, depicting yakuza gangsters, the series pays homage to modern-day video games as well as the legacy of Japanese filmmakers like Akira Kurosawa and the original *The Last Samurai*.

That 2003 film, directed by Edward Zwick, starred Tom Cruise as the samurai hero. It was a big hit, including in Japan, and it helped Japan’s own stars like Ken Watanabe and Hiroyuki Sanada in their Hollywood careers.

“The purpose we had in mind was to update the jidaigeki,” said Okada, using the Japanese term for the samurai drama genre.

Okada, who also served as choreographer and producer in “Last Samurai Standing,” said everybody in Japanese film knew so much about the greats who had preceded them, like Kurosawa. The genre even came with a grandiose “textbook” about the proper portrayal of Japanese culture.

“We took the want-to approach, keeping in mind that, while thoroughly studying jidaigeki, we were going to do what we



LAST SAMURAI STANDING. In the top image, Junichi Okada, left, and Hideaki Ito, right, are seen in a scene from director Michihito Fujii’s “The Last Samurai Standing.” In the new Netflix series that launched in November, hero Saga Kokushu, played by Okada, is one of dozens of samurai in a live-or-die survival game to save family, community, and honor. In the bottom photo are (L-R) Kaya Kiyohara, Okada, Yumia Fujisaki, and Masahiro Higashide. (Chihoko Ishii/Netflix via AP)

pilots, directed by Takashi Yamazaki, of *Godzilla Minus One*.

Okada previously worked with director Fujii in *Hard Days*, a 2023 film about a police officer who tries to cover up a hit-and-run. Okada handpicked Fujii for “Last Samurai Standing.”

“We wanted something more emotional, with more of a story, and more depth in character portrayal, more of a depiction of culture. That’s what I kept in mind,” Okada said.

There’s also plenty of blood and gore, with swords spitting sparks and flying severed heads. Every person, even in crowded battle scenes, is human and not computer-generated.

In one scene where swordsmen’s bodies catch on fire, the actors wore fireproof gear and risked burns, Okada said.

What saves the work from being a numbing series of action scenes is its story line, with the universal theme of being caught in a ruthless world in transition.

The women characters, including newcomer Yumia Fujisaki, feel more modern than the stereotypes who tend to populate older samurai works.

The cast also includes *Himizu* and *Parasyte* star Shota Sometani, Kazunari Ninomiya, memorable in Clint Eastwood’s *Letters from Iwo Jima*, and Takayuki Yamada, who has acted in various films and TV shows including “The Naked Director” on Netflix.



want to make, and make something that looked absolutely cool,” Okada told The Associated Press.

Okada is a black belt in Brazilian jujitsu. He has starred in various films including *The Eternal Zero*, about World War II Zero

Refugee groups worry about backlash after shooting of National Guard soldiers in D.C.

Continued from page 8

to #AfghanEvac and two sources who spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation.

He applied for asylum during the Biden administration and his asylum was approved this year by the Trump administration after undergoing a thorough vetting, the group said.

After the shooting, Trump said his administration would review everyone who entered from the country under former President Joe Biden — a measure his administration had been planning even before the shooting.

Refugee groups fear they’ll now be considered guilty by association.

Ambassador Ashraf Haidari, founder and president of

Displaced International, which provides resources, advocacy, and support to displaced people worldwide, said there must be a thorough investigation and justice for those who were harmed, “but even as we pursue accountability, one individual’s alleged actions cannot be allowed to define, burden, or endanger entire communities who had no part in this tragedy.”

Matthew Soerens, a vice president with World Relief, a Christian humanitarian organization that helps settle refugees, including Afghan nationals in Whatcom County, Washington, said the person responsible for the shooting should face justice under the law.

“Regardless of the alleged perpetrator’s nationality, religion, or specific legal status, though,” he said, “we urge our country to recognize these evil actions as those of one person, not to unfairly judge others who happen to share those same characteristics.”

Ukrainian sumo wrestler Aonishiki nears the pinnacle of Japan’s national sport

Continued from page 9

since many wrestlers weigh at least 150 kilograms (330 pounds) and some much more.

Sumo experts in Japan say his success comes from keeping a low body position. He can bench press 460 pounds — about 50% more than his body weight.


“I need to be stronger all around,” he said. “I have to be bigger, and I still need to learn a lot more about sumo.”

Non-Japanese sumo wrestlers have excelled in different periods in Japan. They have included Mongolians, Hawaiians, and now Ukrainians. A second Ukrainian, Shishi Masaru, is also a highly-ranked wrestler in Japan.

Ukraine has a very strong tradition in Olympic wrestling. Its last gold-medal winner was Zhan Beleniuk in the Greco-Roman category at the Tokyo Games, which were delayed until 2021 by the pandemic.

Aonishiki has endeared himself to the Japanese public with his fluent command of their language. He said he arrived speaking no Japanese, but picked it up quickly living only with Japanese wrestlers in the sport’s tightly controlled environment.

Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed.



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Epic tales and star power: How Tollywood is reshaping Indian cinema

By Sheikh Saaliq
The Associated Press

HYDERABAD, India — A fast-rising parallel film industry in India is competing with Bollywood’s musicals and action-packed films and has taken the world by storm: It’s called Tollywood.

As Mumbai is to Hindi films — or Bollywood — the southern Indian city of Hyderabad is to movies made in Telugu, one of the country’s most widely spoken languages. Tollywood films like *RRR* and *Baahubali* have achieved international acclaim at the box office and on the awards stage.

What is Tollywood?

The Telugu-language film industry, widely known as Tollywood, is one of India’s many regional movie-producing centers. But it’s drawn national and global audiences with its high-adrenaline action movies, mythic storylines, and grand visual style. It has carved out its own identity separate from Hindi-language Bollywood by leaning toward star-driven spectacles and large-scale epics.

Tollywood primarily operates out of Hyderabad, which is home to Ramoji Film City. The 1,666-acre facility, recognized by Guinness World Records as the world’s largest film studio complex, houses massive film studio complexes, dozens of production houses, warehouses, movie sets, and post-production facilities. The industry churns out around 300 films every year — fewer than Bollywood but still enough to make it one of India’s largest regional industries.

Tollywood’s growing exposure was in large part sparked by the coronavirus pandemic, as the rapid expansion of streaming services in India allowed regional films to find wider audiences. That expansion also coincided with Bollywood’s struggle to lure audiences back to theaters amid repetitive storylines and rehashes of hits from other languages.

What has also worked in favor of Tollywood is that it offers a rare balance of high-octane action films and nuanced movies charged with real human drama.

“Telugu people have a lot of interest in movies. The Telugu audience watch and accept all kind of movies. They are cinema lovers,” says filmmaker T.V. Ravi Narayan, who is working on a biopic based on an 18th-century social activist. “Because they are cinema lovers, be it *Baahubali*, *Pushpa*, or *RRR*, be it big budget or small budget, be it realistic or biopics or fantasy movies, the audiences accept it.”

What kind of films are made in Tollywood?



Tollywood is known for its high-energy storytelling, big action set pieces, and grand spectacles that are heavy on visual effects. It often blends family drama, action, and mythology into movies, increasingly marketed as “pan-India” releases and dubbed in multiple regional languages.

The films, like other big Indian productions, have crowd-pleasing visuals and feature viral songs and dances central to the narrative and usually presented as grand performance set pieces.

Many Tollywood films are also remade in Bollywood, which has become a proven formula to expand Telugu cinema across India. Dubbing — where actors record voice-overs in Hindi or a professional voice artist replaces the track — is also a standard and tested practice that has made Tollywood more accessible.

The industry does also produce smaller, low-budget films that tend to focus on stories rooted in Telugu culture. Most of

them are set in rural landscapes and explore themes such as social issues, regional cultures, and class inequality. Some of those films are sent straight to streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, where they enjoy a wide reach across India.

What is Tollywood fandom like?

Many Tollywood movie stars like Mahesh Babu, Allu Arjun, Prabhas, Ram Charan, and N.T. Rama Rao Jr. command a near-godlike following, with devoted fan bases that cut across generations. Their movie releases are often tied to regional religious festivals and are preceded by carefully marketed music launch events and dance performances that are spectacles themselves. Tens of thousands of fans attend such events, as they did recently with the first look of S.S. Rajamouli’s *Varanasi*.

The industry has also led to a massive fan club culture, predominantly centered around male film stars. Some fans are so

HIGH-ADRENALINE CINEMA. A visitor sits on a throne on a set of the film Bahubali in Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad, India. A fast-rising parallel film industry in India is competing with Bollywood’s musicals and action-packed films and has taken the world by storm: It’s called Tollywood. As Mumbai is to Hindi films — or Bollywood — the southern Indian city of Hyderabad is to movies made in Telugu, one of the country’s most widely spoken languages. In the bottom photo, a visitor touches their foot to an elephant statue on a set of the film Bahubali. (AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A.)

invested in their favorite stars that they often organize charitable drives and blood donation camps in their names. It is not unusual for fans to perform acts of literal worship, washing male stars’ cardboard cutouts or statues with milk — a ritual usually reserved for Hindu gods.

In theaters across Hyderabad, viewers will commonly dance, whistle, and throw confetti in the air during releases of films. Outside, billboards of major stars are a frequent sight in the city.

Telugu cinema has also influenced regional politics as many actors have become popular politicians. In 1983, superstar N.T. Rama Rao successfully defeated the Congress Party, led by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, within nine months of founding the regional Telugu Desam Party. After sweeping state elections, he became the chief minister.

What’s driving Tollywood’s recent success?

Tollywood’s rapid commercial success and audience acceptance over the past decade has reshaped the country’s entertainment landscape and pushed regional cinema further onto the world stage.

Much of its recent success has been credited to filmmaker S.S. Rajamouli, who favors larger-than-life heroes and imaginative filmmaking. Rajamouli became an international name after *RRR*, or *Rise, Roar, Revolt*, his 2022 three-hour epic set in British India. The sprawling anti-colonial tale became one of India’s biggest hits, a global streaming phenomenon that won an Oscar for best original song. His two-part *Baahubali* series, released in 2015 and 2017, broke box-office records in India and a reedited version combining the two parts, *Baahubali: The Epic*, released in cinemas worldwide in October.

Varanasi, his upcoming adventure film that blends time-travel and Hindu mythology, is expected to release in 2027.

“We set out to do something very big that we all are excited about, and we just hope and pray that audiences across the world you know, embrace it as well,” says S.S. Karthikeya, one of the producers of

Continued on page 19

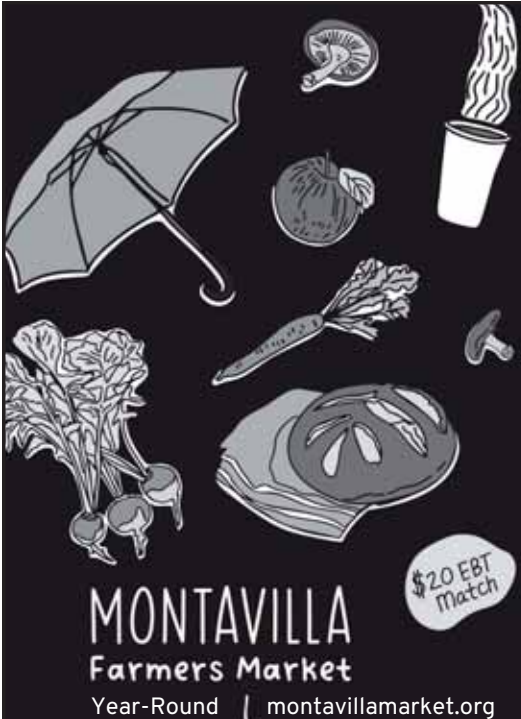
Discover What Makes OES Extraordinary

Meet students who thrive academically and the teachers who inspire them at our **Showcase on January 14.**



Oregon
Episcopal
School

Pre-K through grade 12
oes.edu/admissions



Winter Season

10am–2pm on Sundays
@ SE Stark & 76th

November–December 21:
Every Sunday

January 4–April:
Every other Sunday



Sign up for
text reminders

Events calendar

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>.

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

Currently on view, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sat), 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 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>.

“Boundless: Stories of Asian Art”

Currently on view, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Seattle Asian Art Museum (1400 E Prospect St, in Volunteer Park, 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>.

”Inner Village: Stories of Portland Asian Woman Immigrants”

Through Dec 7, 11am-3pm (Thu-Sun), Portland Chinatown Museum (127 NW Third Ave, Portland). View ”Inner Village: Stories of Portland Asian Woman Immigrants,” a exhibit by Limei Lai, an installation artist who combines mixed media interactive visual art, writing, and performative movement to reflect on her life between two cultures. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 224-0008 or visit <www.portlandchinatownmuseum.org>.

Omiyage Holiday Shop

Through Dec 21, 10am-4pm (Wed-Sat), 11am-4pm (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, books, treats, a selection of curated vintage items, and more — at JAMO’s Omiyage Holiday Shop. For info, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.jamo.org>.

“Building Wonder: Bonsai Treehouses”

Through Dec 21, 10am-4pm (Tue-Sun), Pacific Bonsai Museum (2515 S 336th St, Federal Way, Wash.). View “Building Wonder: Bonsai Treehouses,” an exhibit honoring the creative legacy of Dave Creek, a lead character designer for “Bob’s Burgers,” through a display celebrating his unique art of creating miniature treehouses. The exhibit includes six meticulously crafted treehouses integrated into deceased bonsai, along with photographs documenting Creek’s life and creative journey, quotes highlighting his creativity and passion, and a representation of the mobile “van life” studio Creek created to work on his craft daily, even in remote locations. “Building Wonder” is the first time the general public is able to view the treehouse sculptures outside of children’s hospitals. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (253) 353-7345 or visit <www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org>.

“Meier & Frank Santaland”

Through Dec 31, 10am-5pm (Mon-Sat), noon-5pm (Sun), Oregon Historical Society Museum (1200 SW Park Ave, Portland). View “Meier & Frank Santaland,” a nostalgic vignette featuring items from the original Santaland at Meier & Frank, including Rudolph, animatronic elves, holiday decor, a model of the famous monorail, and the well-remembered Cinnamon Bear costume. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 222-1741 or visit <www.ohs.org>.

Winter Wonderland at PIR

Through Dec 31, 5-10pm (Mon-Thu), 4:30-11pm (Fri-Sun), Portland International Raceway (1940 N Victory Blvd, Portland). Enjoy the annual Winter Wonderland drive-through holiday lights extravaganza at Portland International Raceway (PIR). Illuminating the skies on the two-mile route are hundreds of festive light displays featuring more than a million holiday lights in the form of dinosaurs, a candy cane forest, shimmering tunnels, arches, and more. Participants who would like to walk through the display are invited to attend on December 1 & 2 from 4:15pm to 9:30pm. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 232-3000 or visit <www.winterwonderlandportland.com>.

“Yoshida Chizuko”

Through Jan 4, 10am-5pm (Tue-Sun), Portland Art Museum (1219 SW Park Ave, Portland). View the first major retrospective to focus on groundbreaking 20th-century painter and printmaker Yoshida Chizuko (1924-2017), a pioneering woman modernist in Japan. The display features approximately 100 works, many of which have never previously been exhibited, encompassing early paintings and sketches, rare monotypes, woodblock prints, and zinc-plate mixed media prints, in addition to archival material and ephemera. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 226-2811 or visit <www.portlandartmuseum.org>.

“Echoes of the Floating World”

Through Jan 4, 10am-5pm (Wed & Fri-Sun), 10am-8pm (Thu), Tacoma Art Museum (1701 Pacific Ave, Tacoma, Wash.). View “Echoes of the Floating World,” an exhibit that features a striking collection of 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century Japanese woodblock prints from the Tacoma Art Museum and elsewhere, displayed alongside works by contemporary Pacific Northwest artists. This display honors the rich legacy of ukiyo-e while exploring its cultural impact on today’s artistic expressions. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (253) 272-4258 or visit <www.tacomaartmuseum.org>.

“DISplace”

Through Jan 4, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sat), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View “DISplace,” an exhibit featuring visual art by regional Native Hawaiian creatives; family stories and ephemera; historic photographs; and archival objects that honor these histories and reclaim the narrative through the voices of families and individual descendants today. Co-curated by Native Hawaiian artist and kapa-maker Lehuauakea and artist and educator Kanani Miyamoto, the display sheds light on the often-overlooked histories and movement of people who connect Hawai’i and the Pacific Northwest. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

ZooLights

Through Jan 4, 4:30-9pm (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. New this season, your ZooLights ticket is also a “ticket to ride” on TriMet to and from the Oregon Zoo on your admission date. ZooLights tickets are valid for all TriMet services (bus, MAX, WES, and LIFT) and the Portland Streetcar, but is not valid on C-TRAN. The last entry each night is 8:00pm. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 226-1561 or visit <www.oregonzoo.org/zoolights>.

“She Flies with Her Own Wings: Oregon’s Golden Age of Aviation”

Through Jan 4, 10am-5pm (Mon-Sat), noon-5pm (Sun), Oregon Historical Society Museum (1200 SW Park Ave, Portland). View “She Flies with Her Own Wings: Oregon’s Golden Age of



CHRISTMAS SHIPS. Two fleets of colorfully decorated and illuminated ships will ply the Willamette and Columbia Rivers beginning December 4. The combined fleets of the Christmas Ships Parade usually average about 50 to 70 boats. (Photo courtesy of the Christmas Ships Parade)

Aviation,” a display that reveals the faces and places that shaped a transformative decade in flight. While the 1930s in the United States was a decade shaped by economic depression, it was also a time of opportunity and innovation, especially in the world of aviation. Known as Oregon’s “golden age of aviation,” technological advancements led to the creation of faster, more efficient, and affordable aircraft, testing the limits of what was possible. New career opportunities emerged for men and women as flight schools sprang up in the region and commercial passenger service lifted off. Amidst national uncertainty, the wonder of flight brought hope and promise, connecting communities quite literally through the building of new small airports and the popularity and excitement of airshows. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 222-1741 or visit <www.ohs.org>.

Point Defiance Zoolights

Through Jan 4, 4:30-10pm, Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (5400 N Pearl St, Tacoma, Wash.). Walk through the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium’s Zoolights, a 1.5 million holiday light display featuring the Narrows Bridges, a tunnel of lights, Sasquatch, a giant Pacific octopus, the Flame Tree, and more. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (253) 591-5337 or visit <www.pdza.org>.

“Home for the Holidays”

Through Jan 11, 9:30am-4:30pm, Pittock Mansion (3229 NW Pittock Dr, Portland). View Portland’s historic Pittock Mansion during “Home for the Holidays: The Decades Tour.” Visitors are able to explore festive displays across 19 rooms and the grand foyer in the mansion as well as four in the Gate Lodge, each artfully decorated and representing five iconic decades — from the 1910s to the 1950s. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 823-3623 or visit <www.pittockmansion.org>.

“The Curio: Exhibition & Sale”

Through Jan 17; Dec 5, 6-9pm (reception); Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Attend “The Curio: Exhibition & Sale,” a unique marketplace spotlighting the creative works of nearly 40 local and regional artists. Presented by The Reser and the Beaverton Arts Market, the exhibit features a diverse collection of contemporary arts, crafts, and small reproductions. Attendees have an opportunity to browse the collection, which includes wearable pieces, unique works of art, and functional and decorative wares. For info, call (971) 501-7722 or visit <www.thereser.org/gallery/the-curio-2025>.

“Roots and Resilience — Chinese American Heritage in Oregon”

Through Feb 2026, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Museum of Natural and Cultural History (1680 E 15th Ave, Eugene, Ore.). View “Roots and Resilience — Chinese American Heritage in Oregon,” an exhibit that explores how Chinese immigrants helped shape Oregon history. The display traces Chinese American communities across the state, showcasing artifacts recovered from archaeological digs at sites such as the Ah Heng mining site in the Malheur National Forest and a historic shop and restaurant in Eugene. Objects on view highlight the craftsmanship and expertise of Chinese workers who played vital roles in Oregon’s railroad, mining, and canning industries. For info, call (541) 346-3024 or visit <https://natural-history.uoregon.edu>.

“Ai Weiwei: Water Lilies”

Through Mar 15, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Seattle Asian Art Museum (1400 E Prospect St, in Volunteer Park, Seattle). View “Ai Weiwei: Water Lilies,” a nearly 50-foot-long piece created with 650,000 LEGO blocks, which is being shown for the first time in the U.S. “Water Lilies,” the artist’s largest and most ambitious LEGO work to date, is a reinterpretation of Claude Monet’s iconic triptych from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3100 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

“The Yasui Family: An American Story”

Through Sep 6, 10am-5pm (Mon-Sat), noon-5pm (Sun), Oregon Historical Society Museum (1200 SW Park Ave, Portland). View “The Yasui Family: An American Story,” a display that tells the story of the Yasui family, who were among the millions of immigrants who came to the United States seeking new opportunities during the late 1800s and early 1900s. They established roots in Oregon, started families and businesses, and shaped the social and economic fabric of the communities where they lived. Following the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II, the U.S. government forcibly removed more than 110,000 Japanese Americans — including U.S. citizens — from their homes and imprisoned them in internment camps, often in harsh, remote areas. After the war, many members of the Yasui family returned to Oregon, although some incarcerated chose not to return home due to persistent racism in their communities. While the Yasui family endured racism and incarceration, they also shared a commitment to equal justice through engagement with the local, state, and national forces that determined — and withheld — their civil rights. Through photographs, personal journals, documents, and objects, the exhibit explores how one Japanese American family’s story reflects the complexity of the American story. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 222-1741 or visit <www.ohs.org>.

Beaverton Winter Lights

Dec 1-Jan 3, 4pm-8am, Beaverton City Park (SW 5th St & SW Hall Blvd, Beaverton). Stroll along outdoor light displays at Beaverton City Park 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 5 at 7:00pm. Tree Lighting activities also include Winter Markets from 4:00pm to 8:00pm as well as performances and activities from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. For info, call (503) 526-2222 or visit <www.beavertonoregon.gov/winterlights>.

Christmas Ships Parade

Dec 4-21, Willamette & Columbia Rivers (Portland). Watch two fleets of colorfully decorated and illuminated ships ply the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. The combined fleets of the Christmas Ships Parade usually average about 50 to 70 boats. For route schedule, viewing locations, or to make a donation, visit <www.christmasships.org>.

“Thanatopsis: Meditations on Grief, Death, and Transformation”

Dec 4-Feb 14, noon-7pm (Wed-Thu), 2-7pm (Fri), noon-5pm (Sat); Dec 4, 5-8pm (opening reception); Feb 14, 5-8pm (closing reception); Portland Community College, Cascade Campus,

Continued on page 17

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

Events calendar

Continued from page 16

Paragon Arts Gallery (815 N Killingsworth St, Portland). View “Thanatopsis: Meditations on Grief, Death, and Transformation,” an art exhibit that explores the end of life and the grief that accompanies death. For info, call (971) 722-6111 or visit <www.pcc.edu/galleries/cascade>.

Kalani Pe’a

Dec 5, 7:30pm, Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Attend “Hawaiian Christmas,” a concert by songwriter and music composer Kalani Pe’a, the winner of three Grammy Awards. The artist sings everything from classical, musical, ballads, R&B, and soul to traditional and original Hawaiian music. To purchase tickets, call (971) 501-7722 or visit <www.thereser.org>. To learn more, visit <www.kalanipeamusic.com>.

Oregon Koto-Kai Winter Concert

Dec 6, 2:30pm (doors open), 3pm (concert), TaborSpace (5441 SE Belmont St, Portland). Attend the winter koto concert of Oregon Koto-Kai. The family-friendly program includes Japanese story reading accompanied by koto music. The performance also features seasonal pieces full of holiday spirit. For info, e-mail <info@oregonkotokai.org> or visit <www.oregonkotokai.org>. To buy tickets, visit <www.ticketstripe.com/events/3797107979204307>.

My People’s Market

Dec 6-7, 11am-5pm, Oregon Convention Center, Exhibit Halls A-A1 (777 NE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Portland). Attend My People’s Market, a free marketplace featuring 150 local vendors showcasing the best of Portland alongside live performances and activities, including family crafts and face painting. The event highlights locally made gifts and food just in time for the holiday season. For info, call (503) 235-7575, or visit <www.mypeoplesmarket.com> or <www.oregoncc.org>.

Repair Café

Dec 6 & 13, noon-3pm; Dec 6, Midland Library (805 SE 122nd Ave, Portland); Dec 13, Leaven Community Center (5431 NE 20th Ave, Portland). Repair PDX is holding Repair Cafés in northeast and southeast Portland. Volunteers are on hand fixing small appliances, mending garments, and repairing bikes on a first-come, first-served basis. For info, or to let volunteers know in advance what items you might bring in, call (503) 893-9656, e-mail <RepairPDX@gmail.com>, or visit <www.RepairPDX.org>.

Dongzhi at Lan Su

Dec 6-21 (Fri-Sun); 10am-4pm (daytime); 5-7pm (Dec 12-13 & 19-20); Lan Su Chinese Garden (239 NW Everett St, Portland). Community members are invited to celebrate the traditions and warmth of Dongzhi at Lan Su Chinese Garden on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from December 6 to 21. Dongzhi refers to the Winter Solstice in Chinese. Daytime Dongzhi offerings include festive décor, family-friendly cultural activities, Asian Santa (Sat. & Sun., 11am-3pm, \$5/group), a winter wellness Tea Chat, an incense art experience, and more. Dongzhi: A Chinese Holiday Party (a ticketed nighttime experience available on December 12, 13, 19, and 20) features a live musical performance, an illuminated lion dance performance, a tangyuan- and dumpling-making event, and more. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 228-8131 or visit <www.lansugarden.org/dongzhi>.

Clean Slate Clackamas expungement clinic

Dec 8, 2-6pm (doors close at 5:30pm), Children Family Community Connections (104 11th St, Oregon City, Ore.). Clean Slate Clackamas is offering free legal services to people in the Clackamas County area who are seeking criminal record expungements. The clinic aims to assist community members in reducing barriers to employment, housing, and education that keep them from enjoying the benefit of full participation and a clean slate forward. Pre-eligibility screening is highly recommended, as eligibility screenings currently take up to 5 days. For immigration analysis, DACA support, or other needs, please e-mail <expungement@clackamasworkforce.org>. Please remember to bring quarters for the parking meters. For info, e-mail <expungement@clackamasworkforce.org> or visit <www.clackamasworkforce.org/for-people/expungement-clinics>.

“Celebrate PACCO”

Dec 12, 5pm (doors open), 5:30pm (reception), 6:30pm (dinner), The Nines (525 SW Morrison St, Portland). Join the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon (PACCO) for “Celebrate PACCO.” The in-person, formal event is a fundraiser for the organization that brings together business leaders, changemakers, public agencies, and community champions. This year’s emcee is Mia Villanueva, an anchor and reporter for KOIN 6 TV, and the theme is “Back to Our Roots: Building Community, Embracing Tomorrow.” Other highlights of the evening include a four-course dinner, awards honoring small business leaders, singer and performer Kim Bryalle Benoza Frost, a performance by the Tanie Hotan Dance Entertainment Company, and more. For info, call (503) 862-6853. To buy tickets (required), visit <www.pacco.org>.



ILLUMINATED LION DANCE. Dongzhi, which means Winter Solstice in Chinese, will be celebrated December 6 through 21 at Lan Su Chinese Garden in Portland. Pictured is an illuminated lion dance performance, which will be held during evening Dongzhi events. The lion dances are scheduled for December 12, 13, 19, and 20. (Photo courtesy of Lan Su Chinese Garden)

Winter Bonsai Solstice

Dec 13, 4-7pm, Pacific Bonsai Museum (2515 S 336th St, Federal Way, Wash.). Attend the Pacific Bonsai Museum’s Winter Bonsai Solstice, one of only two nights the museum opens after dark. The rare evening transforms the museum’s world-renowned bonsai collection into a captivating living scene of wonder. While experiencing the collection in soft, ethereal holiday lights, attendees may also partake in festive music, a family-friendly atmosphere, hot chocolate, and a Holiday Market offering unique, handcrafted treasures from seven local artisans and purveyors of unique goods. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own flashlights. For info, call (253) 353-7345 or visit <www.pacificbonsaimuseum.org>.

The Nutcracker

Dec 13-14, 2pm & 7pm, Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Watch *The Nutcracker*, a production presented by the Oregon International Ballet Academy (OIBA). The show runs 150 minutes with an intermission. For info, call (971) 268-0766. To buy tickets, visit <www.oiballet.org/events> or <www.thereser.org/event/the-nutcracker-2>.

Peacock Lane light display

Dec 15-31, 6-11pm (daily), Peacock Lane (between SE Stark & SE Belmont St, one block east of SE César Chávez Blvd, Portland). Experience the holiday spirit along Portland’s illuminated Christmas Street. The famous Peacock Lane light display opens December 15 at 6:00pm. The Peacock Lane light tradition dates back to 1932, when each house on this little street began decorating for Christmas. The homes, mostly Tudors, are adorned with creative light displays such as Christmas trees, nativity scenes, Santa, Frosty, The Grinch, and more. Pedestrian-only nights are held December 19 & 20. The free event is presented by homeowners, who encourage visitors to view the display on foot and enjoy hot cocoa. Donations are accepted. For info, visit <www.peacocklane.org>.

ZooZoo

Dec 19-Jan 4, Imago Theatre (17 SE Eighth Ave, Portland). Watch *ZooZoo*, an Imago Theatre performance featuring bugeyes, introverted frogs, hippos with insomnia, tricky penguins, paradoxical polar bears, acrobatic worms, and more. For info, showtimes, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 231-9581 or visit <www.imagotheatre.com>.

PYP “Concert-at-Christmas”

Dec 26, 7:30pm, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall (1037 SW Broadway, Portland). Enjoy a special “Concert-at-Christmas” by the Portland Youth Philharmonic (PYP). The performance, called “A Popcorn Solstice,” includes works by Bruce Stark, Leonard Bernstein, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, John Williams, and others. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 714-8572 or visit <www.portlandyouthphil.org>.

Japanese New Year celebration

Jan 11, 10am-2:30pm, Portland Japanese Garden (611 SW Kingston Ave, Portland). Ring in the incoming Year of the Horse at *O-Shogatsu*, the traditional Japanese New Year celebration. The family-friendly event includes *sumi-e*, Japanese ink-wash painting (10am-2:30pm); *Edo Kotobuki Jishi*, the celebratory traditional lion dance of Tokyo, performed by Portland Shishimai Kai (10:30am & 12:15pm); and more. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 223-1321 or visit <www.japanesegarden.com>.

Free Food Pantry

¡Despensas de comida gratis!

Бесплатные продовольственные кладовые!

Open to ALL Evergreen Public School Families!

¡Abierto para TODAS las familias de las escuelas públicas Evergreen!

Открыто для ВСЕХ семей государственных школ Evergreen!

BURTON 1:30 - 2:30 OCTOBER 1, NOVEMBER 5, DECEMBER 3, JANUARY 7, FEBRUARY 4, MARCH 4, APRIL 1, MAY 6	PIONEER & FRONTIER 11:00 - 12:00 OCTOBER 2, NOVEMBER 6, DECEMBER 4, JANUARY 8, FEBRUARY 5, MARCH 5, APRIL 2, MAY 7	IMAGE 1:30 - 2:30 OCTOBER 8, NOVEMBER 12, DECEMBER 10, JANUARY 14, FEBRUARY 11, MARCH 11, APRIL 15, MAY 13
SILVER STAR 11:00 - 12:00 OCTOBER 14, NOVEMBER 14, DECEMBER 9, JANUARY 13, FEBRUARY 10, MARCH 10, APRIL 14, MAY 12	RIVERVIEW 12:20 - 1:20 OCTOBER 15, NOVEMBER 19, DECEMBER 17, JANUARY 21, FEBRUARY 18, MARCH 18, APRIL 22, MAY 20	SIFTON 1:30 - 2:30 OCTOBER 15, NOVEMBER 19, DECEMBER 17, JANUARY 21, FEBRUARY 18, MARCH 18, APRIL 22, MAY 20
ORCHARDS 11:00 - 12:00 OCTOBER 16, NOVEMBER 20, DECEMBER 18, JANUARY 22, FEBRUARY 19, MARCH 20, APRIL 23, MAY 21	ENDEAVOUR 11:00 - 12:00 OCTOBER 21, NOVEMBER 18, DECEMBER 16, JANUARY 20, FEBRUARY 17, MARCH 17, APRIL 21, MAY 19	MILL PLAIN 1:30 - 2:30 OCTOBER 22, NOVEMBER 19, JANUARY 28, FEBRUARY 25, MARCH 25, APRIL 29, MAY 27 (NO DECEMBER PANTRY)
HARMONY & PACIFIC 11:00 - 12:00 OCTOBER 28, NOVEMBER 25, DECEMBER 15, JANUARY 27, FEBRUARY 24, MARCH 24, APRIL 28, MAY 26	 SCAN TO FIND FREE FOOD SITES 	

To find free food sites, visit www.clarkcountyfoodbank.org/foodfinder

SUN – OFB Free Food Pantries

2025/26 School Year Schedule

September - June

MONDAYS			
Lent Pantry	5105 SE 97 th Ave Portland OR 97266	3:15-4:45	Open to Community
Harrison Park Pantry	2225 SE 87th Ave Portland OR 97216	3:15-4:45	Open to Community
TUESDAYS			
Earl Boyles Pantry	10822 SE Bush St Portland OR 97266	4:00-5:15	Open to Community
Mill Park Pantry	1900 SE 117 th Ave Portland OR 97216	4:00-5:15	Open to Community
WEDNESDAYS			
Gilbert Park Pantry	13132 SE Ramona St Portland OR 97236	4:00-5:15	Open to Community
McDaniel HS Pantry	2735 NE 82 nd Portland OR 97220	2:00-4:00	Open to community 2:00-3:30/McDaniel Students only 3:30-4:00
THURSDAYS			
Menlo Park Pantry	12900 NE Glisan St. Portland OR 97230	2:00-3:30	Permanently closed after 12/19/2025
Parkrose Middle Pantry	11800 NE Shaver St Portland OR 97220	4:00-5:15	Open to Community
FRIDAYS			
Shaver Elementary Pantry	3701 NE 131 st PL Portland OR 97230	2:30-4:00	Permanently closed after 12/13/2025

SUN Community Schools are a collaboration of Multnomah County Department of County Human Services, the City of Portland Parks and Recreation, and Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Portland Public, Parkrose, and Reynolds school districts.

To locate more Free Food Pantries go to: <https://foodfinder.oregonfoodbank.org>

NORTHWEST JOB MARKET



Join our Team –
We’re Hiring



<www.hillsboro-oregon.gov/jobs>



You Belong with Team Tigard
Join our Team – We’re Hiring
<<https://www.tigard-or.gov>>

CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN

East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District is seeking a passionate and motivated individual to execute projects related to habitat restoration and invasive plant species control, and to provide guidance related to such projects to a diverse audience. The work includes outreach to landowners, identification and mapping of noxious weeds, as well as control work in forested ecosystems, riparian areas, roadside right of ways, and other residential and public properties. We are seeking someone to join our team who is passionate and motivated to help advance our strategic priorities of soil health, water quality, equity and climate action.

Annual Wage Range: \$50,826 - \$73,308

Learn more about the position and how to apply by viewing the full job posting and description in the link here:

<<https://emswcd.org/about/employment/conservation-technician/>>

SENIOR CONSERVATIONIST

East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District seeks a program leader to manage restoration efforts that enhance the health of habitats and ecosystems in partnership with private landowners. The Rural Lands Senior Conservationist will lead the StreamCare program to improve riparian areas and support enhancement of other priority habitats. Responsibilities include landowner engagement, restoration project design and implementation oversight, monitoring and reporting, and relationship management with contractors and partners. The ideal candidate is detail-oriented, has expertise in vegetation ecology, thrives in a team-oriented environment, and is passionate about our mission. We are seeking someone to join our team who is passionate and motivated to help advance our strategic priorities of soil health, water quality, equity and climate action.

Annual Wage Range: \$70,854 - \$106,281

Learn more about the position and how to apply by viewing the full job posting and description in the link here:

<<https://emswcd.org/about/employment/senior-conservationist/>>

BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

CITY OF MILWAUKIE
ON-CALL NATURAL RESOURCES
EVALUATION SERVICES

Proposals due: December 10, 2025

The City of Milwaukie is seeking qualifications from experienced businesses or individuals for evaluation of development activities that may impact natural resource areas within the city. Proposers should possess high competency for natural resource assessment in the context of land use review.

The City utilizes Bonfire Interactive for its eProcurement solution. To access the solicitation documents, be added to the distribution list for this solicitation’s automatic notices, and to submit proposals electronically, please visit <<https://milwaukieoregon.bonfirehub.com/>> to login or register.

Proposals are due by 2:00pm PST, on Wednesday, December 10, 2025. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. There will be no formal opening of proposals.

BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

PARKWAY WEST APARTMENTS

Salem Housing Authority to Accept Applications for Parkway West 2 and 3 bedroom Apartments

Effective Saturday, December 6, 2025, at 9:00am until Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 11:59 pm, Salem Housing Authority (SHA) will accept applications for the Parkway West Apartments 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom waiting lists.

Parkway West is located on 7th Place NE in Salem. For more information about this property, visit our website at <www.salemhousingor.com/parkway-east-west>.

Applications will be placed on the waiting list in date and time order.

A valid email address is required to apply.

A small number of units at Parkway West are restricted to households earning at or below 50% Area Median Income (AMI), or up to 80% AMI. Most units at Parkway West are restricted to households earning at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) limit.

To apply, visit <www.salemhousingor.com> and click the “Apply Now” link.

Applications may only be submitted between December 6, 2025, at 9:00am and December 21, 2025, at 11:59pm. Applications will not be accepted after the application window closes.

Questions may be directed to <housing@salemhousingor.com>.



Equal Housing Opportunity

AVISO PÚBLICO

PARKWAY WEST APARTMENTS

La Autoridad de Vivienda de Salem aceptará solicitudes para apartamentos de 2 y 3 habitaciones en Parkway West

A partir del sábado 6 de diciembre de 2025 a las 9:00am hasta el domingo 21 de diciembre de 2025 a las 11:59pm, la Autoridad de Vivienda de Salem (SHA) aceptará solicitudes para las listas de espera de 2 y 3 dormitorios de Parkway West Apartments.

Parkway West está ubicado en 7th Place NE en Salem. Para obtener más información sobre esta propiedad, visite nuestro sitio web en <www.salemhousingor.com/parkway>.

Las solicitudes se colocarán en la lista de espera en orden de fecha y hora.

Se requiere una dirección de correo electrónico válida para aplicar.

Un pequeño número de unidades en Parkway West están restringidas a hogares que ganan igual o inferior al 50% del ingreso medio del área (AMI), o hasta el 80% del AMI. La mayoría de las unidades en Parkway West están restringidas a hogares que ganan igual o menos del 60% del límite de ingresos medios del área (AMI).

Para postularse, visite www.salemhousingor.com y haga clic en el enlace "Solicitar ahora". Las solicitudes solo se pueden presentar entre el 6 de diciembre de 2025 a las 9:00am y el 21 de diciembre de 2025 a las 11:59pm.

No se aceptarán solicitudes después de que se cierre la ventana de solicitud.

Las preguntas pueden dirigirse a <housing@salemhousingor.com>.



Oportunidad Igual de Vivienda

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

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

January 5 issue: Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1:00pm

February 2 issue: Friday, Jan. 30, 1:00pm

March 2 issue: Friday, Feb. 27, 1:00pm

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

CITY OF MILWAUKIE
ON-CALL SURVEYING SERVICES

Proposals due: December 4, 2025 at 2:00pm

City of Milwaukie (City) is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced consultants to provide high-quality surveying services and easement legal descriptions on an as-needed basis. Proposers should possess strong qualities in communication, timeliness, and competency. City intends to award two (2) contracts, each for a duration of six (6) years and up to \$500,000. A complete description of services is provided under Section 3 in the “RFQ for On-Call Surveying Services” document found in Euna Procurement.

City utilizes Bonfire Interactive for its eProcurement solution. To access the solicitation documents, be added to the distribution list for this solicitation’s automatic notices, and to submit proposals electronically, please visit <<https://milwaukieoregon.bonfirehub.com>> to login or register.

Proposals must be submitted electronically through the City’s Procurement Portal. Proposals will be received until 2:00pm PST on Thursday, December 4, 2025. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

INVITATION TO BID

METRO
TONQUIN TRAIL
ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT
ITB 4538

Metro is inviting bids to make ADA-accessibility upgrades at Graham Oaks Nature Park as per plans, specifications at location: 11825 SW Wilsonville Road, Wilsonville, Oregon 97070.

Bids are due no later than 2:00pm, January 8, 2026 in Metro’s business offices at 600 NE Grand Avenue, Portland, OR 97232-2736, Attention: Yvette Lock, Procurement Analyst, ITB 4538. Responses will be opened publicly at that time.

A Voluntary Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for all potential prime and sub-contractors on December 17, 2025, at 9:30am at 11825 SW Wilsonville Road, Wilsonville, Oregon 97070. Meeting in the parking lot. Per Metro’s Subcontractor Equity Program, Contractors that submit a bid for this project must solicit a sub-bid from ALL COBID certified businesses who attend the pre-bid conference.

Solicitation documents can be viewed and downloaded from Bid Locker, <bidlocker.us>.

All bidders submitting a bid for public improvements over \$50,000 certify that they will pay and comply with the minimum prevailing wage requirements of ORS 279C.800-279C.870 and if applicable 40 U.S.C.276a.

Metro may accept or reject any or all bids, 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, emerging small businesses and service-disabled veteran owned businesses to access and participate in this and all Metro projects, programs and services. Metro Local Contract Review Board Rules require all Bidders to follow and document a specific outreach effort to State-certified Minority, Emerging, Women-owned and Service-Disabled Veteran owned Businesses. Certification of good faith compliance and a declaration of any actual utilization pursuant to both programs are required at the time of Bid Opening.

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>.

Mark your calendar for The Year of the Horse!

The Year of the Horse begins February 17, 2026.

Display advertising space reservations for our special Year of the Horse issue are due Monday, January 19 at 5:00pm.

The Asian Reporter’s Lunar New Year special issue will be published on Monday, February 2, 2026.

A flooded restaurant in Thailand brings delight with swimming fish among diners

By Jerry Harmer
The Associated Press

NAKHON PATHOM, Thailand — A restaurant in central Thailand was bursting with a stream of customers coming for a unique dining experience: Enjoying a meal while sitting in flood waters, surrounded by live fish they bring into the establishment.

Since an adjacent river breached its banks in early November, the flooded riverside restaurant became an internet sensation, drawing customers keen to pose in the lapping brown water or toss fish food to photograph the feeding frenzy.

Families enjoyed lunch at Pa Jit restaurant in Nakhon Pathom province, about 20 miles from Bangkok, with enthralled toddlers gawping at the river fish flapping around their thighs. Wait staff in waders gingerly carried bowls of fish soup or chicken noodles from table to table.

Pa Jit has been a riverside fixture for more than 30 years, said owner Pornkamol Prangprempree. When the restaurant was



flooded the first time around four years ago, her heart sank.

“I thought there would be no customers for sure,” she said. “But then there was a customer who posted online showing that there were fish. Then a lot of people flocked here to eat.”

She said floods have boosted her business, with her profits doubling from around 10,000 baht (\$309) to around 20,000 baht (\$618) per day.

Chomphunuth Khantaniti, a 29-year-

FEEDING FRENZY. Diners at Pa Jit restaurant take video of fish in the aisles of the flooded dining area. The fish arrive in floodwater from the Tha Chin River in Thailand’s Nakhon Pathom province, west of Bangkok, Thailand. Pa Jit has been a riverside fixture for more than 30 years, said owner Pornkamol Prangprempree. When the restaurant was flooded the first time around four years ago, her heart sank, but “then there was a customer who posted online showing that there were fish. Then a lot of people flocked here to eat.” (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

old who lives in the same province, was there with her husband and son. She said when she heard, she couldn’t resist.

“I think it’s good, because we can bring the children here. When the children see the fish, they become less fussy,” she said. “I think in Thailand, there’s only this place where you can see fish coming up like this.”

Bella Windy, 63, came to the restaurant because she wanted to feel the fish nibbling on her feet.

“Normally, if the water is very high, the fish will come here. The nature experience here is the highlight of this restaurant and it attracts people.”

Pa Jit expects about another week of inundation, as high tides and the tail-end of the monsoon season keep water levels up.

Though the flooding has brought an unusual boon to Pa Jit, it has devastated many other areas of Thailand. Since late July, 12 people were killed and two went missing due to flooding, according to data from the Department of Disaster Prevention and mitigation.

It reported that more than 480,000 people in 13 provinces, particularly in the north and the central, were affected by floods, as of November 14.



GIVE WITH
cheer
TO LAST THE
year
Share



Purchase New, High-Need Items | Fill a Food Box or Host a Food Drive
Host a 'Make a Home' Donation Drive | Volunteer With Us!

LEARN MORE: sharevancouver.org

OREGON PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCE

OPGR

HERE COME THE HOLIDAYS

If there's one thing we know about joyous celebrations and family get togethers, it is that the fun inevitably comes with a certain amount of pressure. With the natural desire to make everything perfect, the stakes are just a little bit higher as the year draws to a close. The holidays can quickly turn into a litmus test of how we handle pressure. And, for some of us, we seek release in habits that might not serve our best interests—habits like gambling.

OPGR CAN HELP

As we roll into the holiday season, make a plan to cope with the pressure of the holidays this year. The Oregon Problem Gambling Resource (OPGR) can help. With free online and in-person resources, we can help you explore the path ahead and equip you with a plan of action. If you simply want to regain control of your gambling or eliminate it entirely, we can help. Save the best gift for yourself this holiday season: a better path forward.



Learn more: OPGR.org