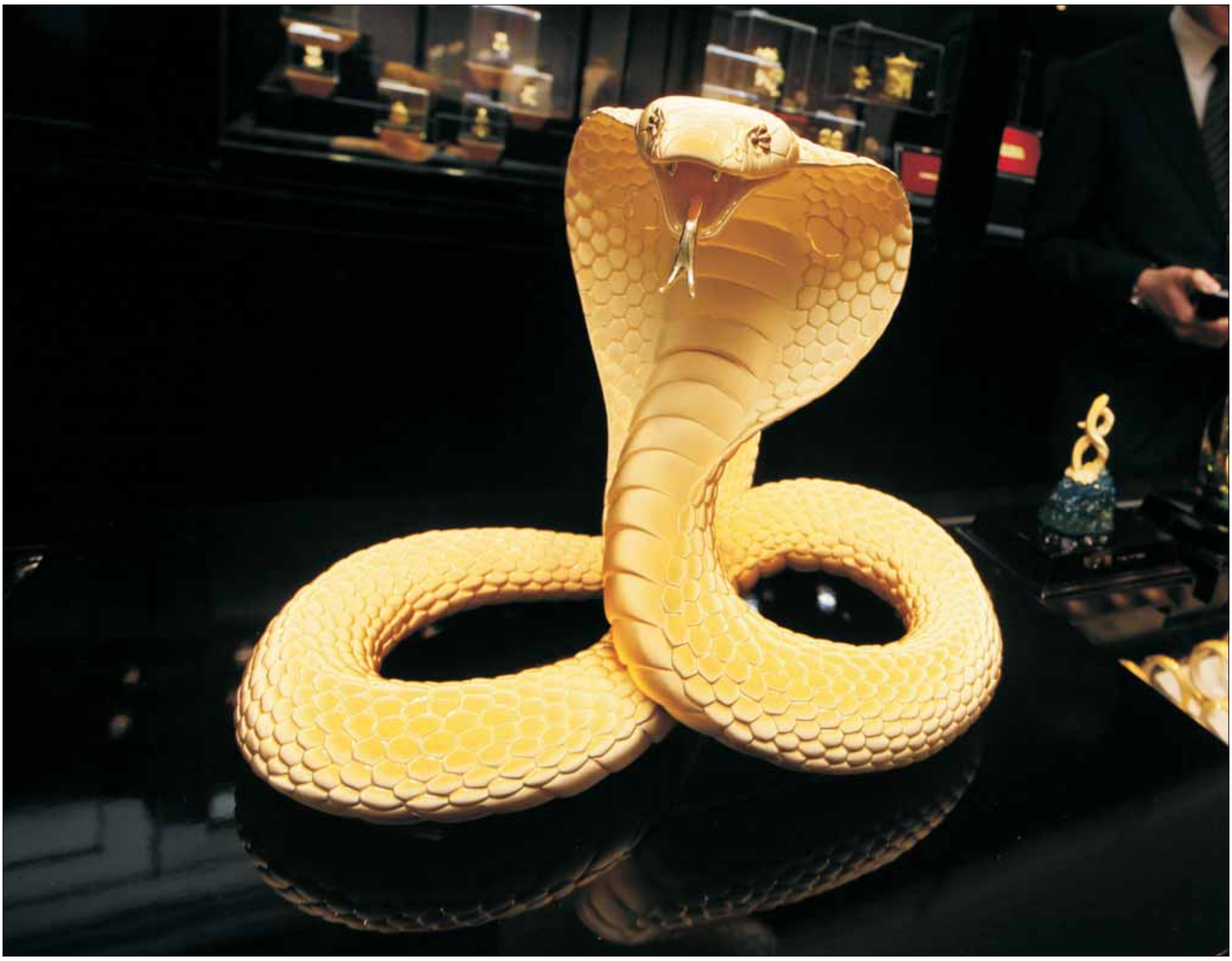
The Asian Reporter

Pacific Northwest News ❑ Volume 35 Number 1 ❑ January 6, 2025 ❑ www.asianreporter.com

Read your New Year horoscope! See page 14!

Welcome the Year of the Snake!



THE DIPLOMATIC SNAKE. *A gold snake is displayed in honor of the Year of the Snake at a jewelry store in Hong Kong in this January 18, 2013 file photo. This year's Lunar New Year celebration welcomes the Year of the Snake, which begins January 29, 2025 and ends February 16, 2026. Those born in the Year of the Snake are usually clever, compassionate, diplomatic, and fun-loving individuals.* The Asian Reporter*'s special section celebrating the Lunar New Year begins on page 8. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File)*

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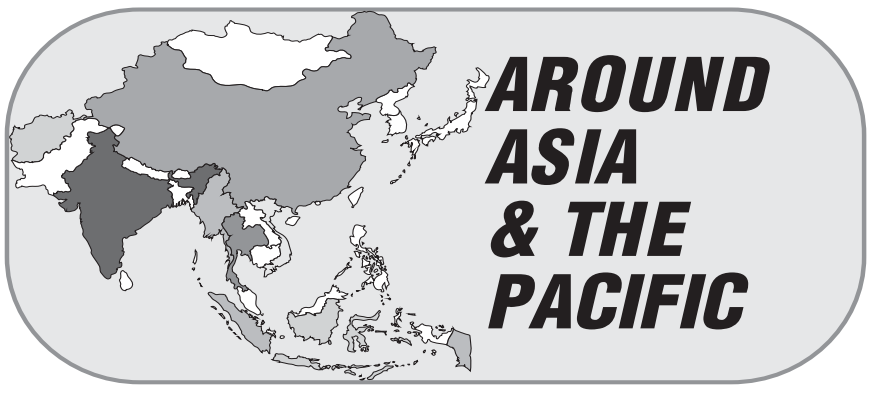
The Asian Reporter is published on the first Monday each month.

The staff at The Asian Reporter wish you and your family a safe and happy Lunar New Year!



Indian teen becomes the youngest chess world champion

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian teenager Gukesh Dommaraju became the youngest chess world champion after beating the defending champion, Ding Liren of China, in the final match of their series in Singapore. Dommaraju, 18, secured 7.5 points against 6.5 of his Chinese rival in the contest, surpassing the achievement of Russia's Garry Kasparov who won the title at the age of 22. The Indian teen prodigy has long been considered a rising star in the chess world after he became a chess grandmaster at 12 years old. He had entered the match as the youngest-ever challenger to the world crown after winning the Candidates tournament last year. After securing the victory, Dommaraju burst into tears and raised his arms in celebration. "I was dreaming this moment for the last 10 years. I am happy that I realized the dream (and made it) into reality," he told reporters after his win. Dommaraju is now the second Indian to win the title after five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand. "It's a proud moment for chess, a proud moment for India … and for me, a very personal moment of pride," Anand, who has been a mentor to Dommaraju, said in a post on X. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the 18-year-old on his "remarkable accomplishment," calling it "the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work, and unwavering determination." "His triumph has not only etched his name in the annals of chess history but has also inspired millions of young minds to dream big and pursue excellence," Modi said in a post on X. The match was a 14-round long-time classical event with a prize fund of $2.5 million.

Relic of the Buddha gets a warm welcome in Thailand

BANGKOK (AP) — More than 2,000 people took part in a procession to escort a relic of the Buddha lent by China to a shrine in the Thai capital of Bangkok to honor the birthday of King Maha Vajiralongkorn and to celebrate half a century of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China. The tooth relic, considered sacred by Buddhists, was flown earlier in the day from the Lingguang Temple in Beijing, which normally houses it. Loans of the tooth as a show of friendship have been an effective form of soft diplomacy by China, even though competing claims from various countries on possessing the Buddha's tooth raise questions about its provenance. The tooth was put into an ornate, golden container and placed on a flower-bedecked float as it was paraded through one of the oldest neighborhoods of the city. Attendants flanked the vehicle as it travelled about 1 1/2 miles to the relic's temporary home, a soaring pavilion on Sanam Luang, a large field outside Bangkok's famous Grand Palace. Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and members of her cabinet received the relic amid the sounds of chanting monks. Representatives of China, including Beijing's ambassador to Thailand, were also present, according to local media. The loan was the latest in a series of events to mark the 72nd birthday of the Thai king. It also commemorates the upcoming 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China. It was previously displayed in Thailand in 2002 to mark the 75th birthday of Vajiralongkorn's father, King Bhumibol, who died in 2016. The relic will be on public display at the pavilion through mid-February.

Elephant in Pakistan dies weeks after family reunion

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — An elephant died of a bacterial infection at a Pakistani safari park, an official said, less than two weeks after being reunited with her sister. Sonia, who was almost 19, is the second elephant to die in two years in the southern city of Karachi, where she had lived since 2009. She was reunited recently with her sister Madhubala, who was transferred from the Karachi Zoological Garden to be with her family members. Madhubala was separated from sisters Sonia and Malika about 15 years ago. Pakistani veterinary surgeons found that a bacterial infection killed Sonia. Dr. Amir Khalil with Vienna-based Four Paws told The Associated Press that the infection spread through 19-year-old Sonia's body from her foot, raising concerns about how Pakistani authorities handle animals "as such infections don't spread in one day." Pakistan has a troubled history with elephants in captivity. Noor Jehan, 17, was brought to Karachi with three other elephants more than a decade ago. She died in April 2023, days after undergoing a critical medical procedure by a team of international veterinarians. In 2020, Kaavan, dubbed the "world's loneliest elephant" after languishing alone for years in a Pakistani zoo, was sent to a Cambodian sanctuary for the much-needed company of other elephants. Efforts to transfer him from Pakistan were supported by singer and actor Cher, who campaigned for his rescue.

U.S. Navy ship makes first port call in Cambodia in 8 years

SIHANOUKVILLE, Cambodia (AP) — A U.S. Navy warship arrived in Cambodia last month, the first such visit in eight years to a nation that is China's close ally in Southeast Asia. Cambodia's government has suggested the port call reflects an upgrade in often-strained relations. The *USS Savannah* docked at the port of Sihanoukville on the Gulf of Thailand for a five-day visit. The *Savannah*, classed as a Littoral Combat Ship, carries a crew of 103. "It's great to be back, returning U.S. presence to here after eight years," the ship's commanding officer, Daniel A. Sledz, said in brief remarks to reporters. He was given a bouquet of flowers by a Cambodian officer and shook hands with a line of her colleagues. The United States for many years has had rocky relations with Cambodia, criticizing its government for political repression and human rights violations. There is particular concern about its close ties with China, which Washington fears may get exclusive access to a Cambodian naval base on the Gulf of Thailand, not far from where the *Savannah* docked.

PANDA-MONIUM. *During a welcome ceremony of the panda-themed exhibition PANDA GO! FEST HK in Hong Kong, approximately 2,500 panda sculptures were displayed at the Hong Kong International Airport. Thousands of giant panda sculptures greeted residents and tourists last month in Hong Kong, where enthusiasm for the bears has grown since two cubs were born in a local theme park. Pictured in the bottom photo is Beijing-gifted giant panda An An making his debut appearance to media at Ocean Park in Hong Kong. (AP Photos/Chan Long Hei)*

HK displays 2,500 panda sculptures to capitalize on a local bear craze

By Kanis Leung
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Thousands of giant panda sculptures greeted residents and tourists last month in Hong Kong, where enthusiasm for the bears has grown since two cubs were born in a local theme park.

The 2,500 sculptures were showcased in a launch ceremony of PANDA GO! FEST HK, the city's largest panda-themed exhibition, at Hong Kong's airport. They were publicly displayed at the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui, a popular shopping district, before setting their footprint at three other locations in December.

One designated spot was Ocean Park, home to the twin cubs, their parents, and two other pandas gifted by Beijing last year. The design of six of the sculptures, made of recycled rubber barrels and resins among other materials, was inspired by these bears.

The cubs — whose birth in August made their mother Ying Ying the world's oldest first-time panda mom — may meet visitors as early as February.

In a separate media preview event, the new pair of Beijing-gifted pandas, An An and Ke Ke, who arrived in September, appeared relaxed in their new home at Ocean Park. An An enjoyed eating bamboo in front of the cameras and Ke Ke climbed on an installation. They met members of the public in early December.

The displays reflect Hong Kong's use of pandas to boost its economy as the Chinese financial hub works to regain its position as one of Asia's top tourism destinations.

Pandas are considered China's unofficial national mascot. The country's giant panda loan program with overseas zoos has long been seen as a tool of Beijing's soft-power diplomacy.

Hong Kong's tourism industry representatives are upbeat about the potential impact of housing six pandas, hoping to boost visitor numbers even though caring for pandas in captivity is expensive. Officials have encouraged businesses to capitalize on the popularity of the bears to seize opportunities in what some lawmakers have dubbed the "panda economy."

Continued on page 6

Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 1/03

Bangladesh Taka	119.99
Cambodian Riel	4030.1
China Renminbi	7.3206
Fijian Dollar	2.326
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7758
Indian Rupee	85.766
Indonesian Rupiah	16200
Iranian Rial	42003
Japanese Yen	157.3
Laos New Kip	21729
Malaysian Ringgit	4.50
Nepal Rupee	137.29
Pakistani Rupee	278.56
Papua N.G. Kina	4.038
Philippine Peso	58.077
Russian Ruble	110.41
Saudi Riyal	3.7556
Singapore Dollar	1.3702
South Korean Won	1467.2
Sri Lankan Rupee	293.82
Taiwan Dollar	32.93
Thai Baht	34.48
Vietnam Dong	25425

South Korea air crash investigators extract black box data as grieving families mourn the victims

By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Grieving relatives of the victims of the South Korea plane crash gathered at the site to pay respects to their loved ones on New Year's Day, as officials said they had extracted data from one of the retrieved black boxes to find the exact cause of the crash.

All but two of the 181 passengers and crew on board the Boeing 737-800 operated by Jeju Air died when it crashed at Muan International Airport in southern South Korea.

Video showed the aircraft without its landing gear deployed landing on its belly at high speed and then skidding off the end of the runaway into a concrete fence and bursting into flames. The footage showed the plane was experiencing an apparent engine problem in addition to the landing gear malfunction.

Investigators say the pilot received a warning from air traffic controllers of possible bird strikes and the plane issued a distress signal before the crash.

The Transport Ministry said in a statement that it completed works to extract data from the cockpit voice recorder — one of the two black boxes recovered from the wreckage. It said the data would be converted into audio files. A damaged flight data recorder was planned to be sent to the United States for analysis, the ministry added.

All of the victims were South Korean, except for two Thai nationals, with many returning from Bangkok after the Christmas holiday.

The bereaved families visited the site for an emotional memorial service. They were bussed to the site where they took turns

CRASH INVESTIGATION. *Rescue team members are seen at the site of a plane fire at Muan International Airport in Muan, South Korea. Grieving relatives of the victims of the plane crash gathered at the site to pay respects to their loved ones on New Year's Day, as officials said they had extracted data from one of the retrieved black boxes. (AP Photo/ Ahn Young-joon)*

laying white flowers. Many knelt and bowed deeply before a memorial table laid with food, including "ddeokguk," a Korean rice cake soup eaten on New Year's Day.

The Transport Ministry said authorities have completed the complicated process of identifying all 179 victims.

The country observed seven days of national mourning following the deadliest disaster in South Korea's aviation history in decades.

The government has begun safety inspections of all 101 Boeing 737-800s operated by the country's domestic airlines. A team of U.S. investigators, including representatives from Boeing, also arrived to examine the crash site.

Officials have said they will consider whether the airport's localizer — a set of antennas housed in a concrete fence at the end of the runway designed to guide aircraft during landings — should have been constructed with lighter materials that would break more easily upon impact.

Cambodian archaeologists discover a dozen centuries-old sandstone statues at Angkor UNESCO site

By Sopheng Cheang
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Archaeologists in Cambodia have unearthed a dozen centuries-old sandstone statues in a "remarkable discovery" at the Angkor World Heritage Site near the city of Siem Reap, according to authorities.

The statues — depicting so-called "door guardians" — were discovered near the north gate leading to the 11th-century Royal Palace at Angkor Thom, the last capital of the Khmer Empire, said Long Kosal, spokesman for the Apsara National Authority, the government agency that oversees the archaeological park.

Teams were assessing the ancient gate's structure and searching for fallen stones around the portal on the north side of Angkor Thom, one of four entrances to the complex, when the discovery was made.

The statues depict guardians standing at attention and vary in size from about 39" to 43". They were found buried at depths of up to 4.5 feet and some are in surprisingly good shape, with each featuring unique facial hair ornaments, adding to their distinctiveness, archaeologist Sorn Chanthorn said.

"Experts believe these door guardian statues exemplify the Khneang Style, aligning with the construction period of the 11th-century palace." the Apsara National Authority said.

Angkor Thom is part of the Angkor Archaeological Park, a complex that sprawls over some 155 square miles, named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992 and one of Southeast Asia's most popular tourist destinations.

It contains the ruins of Khmer Empire capitals from the 9th to 15th centuries, including the temple of Angkor Wat.

The site, near Siem Reap, about 200 miles northwest of the capital, Phnom Penh, drew more than 500,000 international visitors in the first half of 2024, according to Cambodia's Tourism Ministry.

The archaeological dig was a collaborative project between Apsara and the China-Cambodia Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor, Apsara said.

Following the discovery of the statues, the archaeological team carefully docu-

Continued on page 4

DAZZLING DISPLAY. *People watch a panda-themed drone show at the waterfront of Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong on December 28, 2024. Hundreds gathered in Hong Kong in late December to watch the city's first pyrotechnics drone show, as part of a campaign to raise support and awareness of panda conservation. (AP Photo/Chan Long Hei)*

Hundreds gathered in Hong Kong for the city's first pyrotechnics drone show

By Zen Soo
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hundreds gathered in Hong Kong in late December to watch the city's first pyrotechnics drone show, as part of a campaign to raise support and awareness of panda conservation.

The 10-minute drone show featured 1,000 drones, some of which were equipped with fireworks, flying over Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour and forming images of the city's giant pandas.

During certain parts of the spectacle, some drones displayed fireworks, while hundreds of others formed a three-dimensional panda that slowly rotated in the sky.

Some eager spectators arrived hours before the show to ensure that they would have a good viewing spot.

Eddie Chow, a father who brought his two kids to the drone show, said such shows could attract more tourists to Hong Kong.

"I think the rundown was great. Combining fireworks and drones is a very special theme. Hong Kong should have more of these activities," said Chow, adding that the spectacle was his first experience in watching a drone show.

Other spectators, such as Jodi Hung, a Hong Kong resident in her 20s, also praised the drone show as "great."

"I think people who designed the drone show had very good technique, very amazing, they combined art and techniques together," Hung said.

Hong Kong has launched a series of activities across the city in recent weeks — including exhibitions and a panda-themed carnival — after Beijing gifted Hong Kong with a pair of giant pandas, named An An and Ke Ke. The arrival of the pair takes the total number of giant pandas in Hong Kong to six, all of whom reside at the city's Ocean Park, a theme park comprising amusement park rides and animal exhibits.

Japanese artist finds solace, global fans with intricate leaf-cutting

Continued from page 20

things the same way as other people, and began to adjust his life.

In early 2020, Lito came across the art of leaf cutting. He saw it as the perfect use of his patience and concentration.

Word of his skills has spread across social media, and he has published books on his leaf-cutting work. He holds a near-monthly solo exhibition in various places in Japan.

"If I can make people happy by doing what I am doing, I want to do more. That's my driving force for what's next," Lito says.

Once taboo, more Japanese women are brewing saké

By Ayaka McGill
The Associated Press

FEMALE TOJI. *Saké brewer Mie Takahashi, top photo, prepares steamed rice with koji mold for saké making in a temperature-controlled room at her Koten saké brewery in Okaya, central Japan. In the bottom photo, Takahashi, far right, and her crew — from left, Tatsuya Ogawa, Daichi Ushiyama, and Shigeru Kikuchi — work on the Japanese saké making process as they move steamed rice, front, into another unit at the Koten saké brewery. (AP Photos/Hiro Komae)*

OKAYA, Japan — Not long after dawn, Japanese saké brewer Mie Takahashi checks the temperature of the mixture fermenting at her family's 150-year-old saké brewery, Koten, nestled in the foothills of the Japanese Alps.

She stands on an uneven narrow wooden platform over a massive tank containing more than 800 gallons of a bubbling soup of steamed rice, water, and a rice mold known as koji, and gives it a good mix with a long paddle.

"The morning hours are crucial in saké making," said Takahashi, 43. Her brewery is in Nagano prefecture, a region known for its saké making.

Takahashi is one of a small group of female toji, or master saké brewers. Only 33 female toji are registered in Japan's Toji Guild Association out of more than a thousand breweries nationwide.

That's more than several decades ago. Women were largely excluded from saké production until after World War II.

Saké making has a history of more than a thousand years, with strong roots in Japan's traditional Shinto religion.

But when the liquor began to be mass produced during the Edo period, from 1603 until 1868, an unspoken rule barred women from breweries.

The reasons behind the ban remain obscure. One theory is that women were considered impure because of menstruation and were therefore excluded from sacred spaces, said Yasuyuki Kishi, vice director of the Sakéology Center at Niigata University.

"Another theory is that as saké became mass produced, a lot of heavy labor and dangerous tasks were involved," he said. "So the job was seen as inappropriate for women."

But the gradual breakdown of gender barriers, coupled with a shrinking workforce caused by Japan's fast-aging population, has created space for more women to work in saké production.

"It's still mostly a male-dominated industry. But I think now people focus on whether someone has the passion to do it, regardless of gender," Takahashi said.

She believes mechanization in the brewery is also helping to narrow the gender gap. At Koten, a crane lifts hundreds of pounds of steamed rice in batches and places it onto a cooling conveyor, after which the rice is sucked through a hose and transported to a separate room dedicated to cultivating koji.

"In the past, all of this would have been done by hand," Takahashi said. "With the help of machines, more tasks are accessible for women."

Saké, or nihonshu, is made by fermenting steamed rice with koji mold, which converts starch into sugar. The ancient brewing technique was recognized under UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage in December.

As a child, Takahashi was not allowed to enter her family-owned brewery. But when she turned 15, she was given a tour of the brewery for the first time and was captivated by the fermentation process.

"I saw it bubbling up. It was fascinating to learn that those bubbles were the work of microorganisms that you can't even see," said Takahashi, who couldn't drink alcohol at the time because she was underage. "It smelled really good. I thought it was amazing that this wonderful fragrant saké could be made from just rice and water. So I thought I'd like to try making it myself."

She pursued a degree in fermentation science at the Tokyo University of Agriculture. After graduation, she decided to return home to become a master brewer. She trained for 10 years under the guidance of her predecessor, and at the age of 34 became a toji at her family brewery.

As the brewery enters the winter peak season, Takahashi oversees a team of seasonal workers and production ramps up. It's labor-intensive work, hauling and turning large amounts of heavy steamed rice, and mixing hundreds of gallons of brew. The master brewer must have the knowledge and skill to carefully control optimal koji mold growth, which needs round-the-clock monitoring.

Despite the intensity, Takahashi manages to encourage camaraderie in the brewery, catching up with the team as they hand-mix koji rice side by side in a hot, humid room.

"I was taught that the most important thing is to get along with your team," Takahashi said. "A common saying is that if the atmosphere in the brewery is tense, the saké will turn out harsh, but if things are going well in the brewery, the saké will turn out smooth."

The inclusion of women plays an important role in the survival of the Japanese saké industry, which has seen a steady decline since its peak in the 1970s.

Domestic alcoholic consumption has dropped, while many smaller breweries struggle to find new master brewers. According to the Japan Saké and Shochu Makers Association, today's total production volume is about a quarter of what it was 50 years ago.

To remain competitive, Koten is among many Japanese breweries trying to find a

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Archaeologists discover centuries-old sandstone statues at Angkor UNESCO site

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mented their positions before removing them for cleaning and restoration. They will eventually be returned to their original locations, authorities said.

Many Khmer cultural treasures were looted during the long period of civil war and instability when Cambodia was ruled by the brutal communist Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

Cambodia has benefitted from a trend that in recent decades has seen the repatriation of art and archaeological treasures taken from their homelands. In August, it celebrated the return of dozens of artifacts from museums and private collections abroad.

It has also come under criticism for efforts to clean up the Angkor site, which has involved relocating thousands of families in what Amnesty International has condemned as a "gross violation of international human rights law."

At its meeting in July, the U.N.'s World Heritage Committee recommended that Cambodia invite a new team of experts to monitor the situation.

SANDSTONE STATUES. *This handout photo provided by Apsaras National Authority shows a centuries-old sandstone statue being measured at Angkor Thom in Cambodia. (Phouk Chea/Apsaras National Authority via AP, File)*

sudoku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

Difficulty level: Medium *#18632*

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 #65427 (Easy)

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

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

Singapore gives the world a peek into our food future

By David Goldman and Victoria Milko
The Associated Press

Like much of the rest of the world, Singapore is racing to feed a growing population with limited natural resources. But with almost no land for agriculture, the small, wealthy, fast-paced, and densely-packed nation is doing so by embracing and encouraging new food technologies that may someday help feed us all.

In 2019, Singapore launched a program called 30 by 30, designed to spur the country to produce 30% of its food by 2030, while still using less than 1% of its land for agriculture. The program has encouraged innovation that may offer a peek into the world's food future as land and resources become more scarce around the world.

There are rooftop farms that produce greens such as kale, lettuce, and herbs using a system that relies on nutrient-rich water instead of soil, powered by solar panels. Shrimp are grown in warehouses. The company's largest egg farm uses automated machines to feed the chickens and sort, scan, and check each egg.

Researchers are working to develop varieties of plants that can flourish in extreme, unnatural environments — and ways to grow lobster in a lab, from cells.

But for all the country's government-supported entrepreneurs and sparkling new technology, the country is also learning that this kind of transformation is not so easy.

Consumers can be reluctant to change, and producers have found it hard to turn a profit because costs are high.

It is far from clear that Singapore will reach its 30% goal by 2030, but along the way it may help teach the world — through successes and failures — how to reduce the amount of land needed to produce our favorite dishes.




FUTURISTIC FARMING. *A worker, top left photo, looks over a tank growing fish at the Eco-Ark floating fish farm in Singapore. The "closed-container" aquaculture farm designed by Leow BanTat can produce 400 tons of Asian seabass and fourfinger threadfin per year. Also pictured are threadfin fish swimming in a tank, bottom left photo, and the exterior view of the Eco-Ark, bottom right photo. In the top right photo are plants growing at ComCrop, Singapore's first commercial rooftop farm. ComCrop produces about 20 tons of kale, lettuce, and herbs per month using a system that relies on nutrient-rich water instead of soil, solar power, and carefully controlled temperatures, wind, and light levels. (AP Photos/David Goldman, File)*

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for content.

Editors' note: This story is part of The Protein Problem, an AP series that examines the question, "Can we feed this growing world without starving the planet?"

Baby mammoth preserved for 50,000 years is unveiled in Russia's Siberia

MOSCOW (AP) — The 50,000-year-old remains of a baby mammoth uncovered by melting permafrost have been unveiled to the public by researchers in Russia's Siberia region who call it the best-preserved mammoth body ever found.

Nicknamed Yana, the female mammoth weighs more than 100 kilograms (220 pounds) and is 120 centimeters (47 inches) tall.

Scientists believe that Yana was 1 year old when she died. Her remains are one of seven mammoth carcasses recovered worldwide.

Yana was found among the melting permafrost at the Batagaika crater in the far-eastern Russian area of Yakutia. Known as the "gateway to the underworld," the crater is 1 kilometer deep and has previously revealed the remains of other ancient animals including bison, horses, and dogs.

As permafrost melts, affected by climate change, more and more parts of prehistoric animals are being discovered.

Yana will be studied by scientists at Russia's North-Eastern Federal University, which has a dedicated mammoth research center and museum.

The university described the find as "exceptional" and said it would give researchers new information about how mammoths lived and adapted to their surroundings.

In this photo released by the Mammoth Museum at the Russian North-Eastern Federal University on December 23, 2024, the university's scientists show the remains of a 50,000-year-old baby mammoth uncovered by melting permafrost in Russia's Siberia region. (Michil Yakovlev, Mammoth Museum at the Russian North-Eastern Federal University telegram channel via AP)

Our Lunar New Year special section begins on page 8. The issue is also available online at <www.asianreporter.com>.

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MY TURN

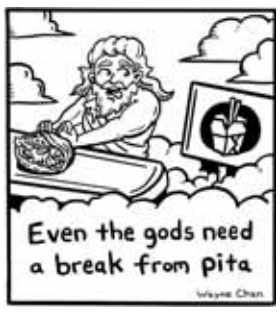
■ *Wayne Chan*

The true meaning of "It's All Greek to Me"

We recently arrived back from Greece. We had an amazing time.

And yet …

Returning home after being in a foreign country gave me a different perspective about a very unique place. I'm talking about the U.S. It makes me appreciate how lucky we are to live here.



There's a myriad of reasons why I appreciate living in America, but let's just start with the food. While Chinese food is my favorite cuisine, that doesn't mean I would naturally be drawn to living in China or Hong Kong, which I readily admit, has some amazing Chinese food.

There's no greater way to explain my perspective on this than a story about our recent trip to Greece.

I love Greek food. Study after study shows that people who follow a Mediterranean diet often have better health and longevity. I love pita bread, gyros, spanakopita, and moussaka. The first few days of our visit to Greece were amazing in terms of food. Emphasis on "the first few days."

Around the fifth or sixth day, I started hankering for something different. That's when it became a bit of a challenge. We were walking along a beautiful, bustling street on the Greek isle of Crete searching for a place for dinner.

The first restaurant we passed had a sign that said, "Authentic Greek Food." We keep walking.

The next place — "Serving Greek Specialties." A few steps further — "Serving Greek Cuisine!" In the end, we ended up having … Greek food.

By the time we reached Athens, things were getting a bit desperate. Now, it's not as extreme as I make it out to be. On occasion, I saw a place selling burgers and fries. And there's nothing wrong with having a nice juicy burger and fries every once in a while. But honestly, I don't eat burgers and fries all that often when I'm in the U.S., so we had gyros and a Greek salad one more time.

By the last day of our visit in Athens, I'd literally had it with Greek food. I'd put up with enough pita. I was weary of gyros. I was petering out of spanakopita and mustered out of moussaka.

That's when I realized the difference.

How often, when walking down a main street in any reasonably sized U.S. city, are there tons of signs with "Real American Food" or "Authentic American Cuisine" everywhere? Actually, it's much more likely one would discover a Mexican place next to a seafood place, next to a Chinese place, next to a sushi bar. And yes — a Greek restaurant and a burger place, too.

So, as our weary legs walked from restaurant to restaurant in search of something — anything — different, I hope readers appreciate the utter joy and relief we felt when we saw a restaurant with Chinese characters on it. It was a hot pot restaurant. It was like manna from heaven.

Returning home and seeing all the diverse restaurants to choose from, in my opinion, *is* American food, or at least what it means to me.

I'm home.

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.

HK displays 2,500 panda sculptures

Continued from page 2

The organizer of the exhibitions also invited some renowned figures, including musician Pharrell Williams, to create special-edition panda designs. Most of the special sculptures will be auctioned online for charity and the proceeds will be donated to Ocean Park to support giant panda conversation efforts.

Ying Ying and the twin cubs' father, Le Le, are the second pair of pandas gifted by Beijing to Hong Kong since the former British colony returned to China's rule in 1997.

The first pair were An An and Jia Jia who arrived in 1999. Jia Jia, who died at 38 in 2016, is the world's oldest-ever panda to have lived in captivity.

The average lifespan for a panda in the wild is 14 to 20 years, while in captivity it's up to 30 years, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

More women are brewing saké

Continued from page 4

wider market both domestically and abroad.

"Our main product has always been dry saké, which local people continue to drink regularly," said Takahashi's older brother, Isao Takahashi, who is in charge of the business side of the family operation. "We're now exploring making higher value saké as well."

He supports his sister's experiments — every year she creates a limited-edition series, Mie Special, that's meant to branch out from their signature dry product.

"My sister would say she wants to try to make low alcohol content, or she wants to try new yeasts — all kinds of new techniques are coming in through her," he said. "I want my sister to make the saké she wants, and I want to do my best to sell it."

Younger Asian Americans navigate something new to their generation: Taking up space

By Deepti Hajela
The Associated Press

REDEFINING REALITY. *Karho Leung, one of the founders of 12 Pell, a local barbershop, stands for a portrait on Pell Street in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood in New York. Anchored in the Chinatown community and equally at home elsewhere in the city, Leung says he's "building the world that I want to live in ... not asking for permission." (AP Photo/John Minchillo, File)*

NEW YORK — The chairs stay occupied at 12 Pell.

Client after client, they come through the tiny barbershop on a narrow side street in Manhattan's Chinatown. They come for the cuts, sure. But really, they're coming for the cool.

From New York City, from the metro area, from many states away, they're coming for what they see on 12 Pell's lively social media accounts, where the young, predominantly Asian American barbers offer advice to teens and men of all ages and ethnicities with humor, quips, confidence, and ease — and not a hint of hesitation.

Karho Leung, 34, embodies that. A son of Chinatown and one of the founders of 12 Pell, he wanted to start a business that reflected him — his creativity, his longstanding interest in fashion and style, his desire for "building the world that I want to live in … not asking for permission."

About as American an idea as it gets, right? The hunger to make your own path, to find your own way, make your voice heard? In some ways, Leung is a case study for the latest incarnation of this. A look at social media and pop culture shows plenty of other Asian Americans of his and younger generations doing the same — in business, in politics, in content creation, in entertainment, in life.

If the space isn't already there, they're determined to create it.

This hasn't always been the reality for many Americans

Any look at the country's past shows that such an American reality hasn't always belonged to everyone, including previous generations of Asian Americans. That American notion of having the freedom to stake out your own space? Oftentimes, that has meant less space for others.

Earlier generations of Asian Americans, some whose ancestors have been here for well over a century and others whose roots trace to recent decades, have lived in Americas where their immigrant-origin communities were smaller and regarded as intrinsically, unceasingly foreign. Americas where there was little mainstream familiarity with the countries Asians and Asian Americans traced their ancestries to, where there was no internet or social media culture that encouraged people to define their own lives.

Instead, there were stereotypes that persist to this day — of otherness, of broken-English speaking, and passiveness, at times sneaky or suspicious, often eating some kind of strange, pungent food. Other iterations included nerds and geeks who could be assumed to ace the math test more readily than score the winning point in the game or being fashionable enough to offer style guidance.

But even as those stereotypes still do harm, they don't have the same power in a country and time when many Americans now eat from a global plate; where yoga studios and henna tattoos, temples and cultural festivals are everywhere; where Asian American creators have some room to tell their own stories; and where the size, variety, and geography of Asian American communities have increased dramatically in the last 20 years even as they remain a small part of the overall whole.

Those stereotypes don't touch Leung — born in Maine and raised since childhood in Chinatown — the same way they impacted generations before him.

"It's funny because even though I watched this type of stereotype and portrayal happen growing up, it never really resonated or hit me that that was what I was up against," he says. "There's a stigma that existed, but I always drove in my own lane."

To claim space requires moving past old assumptions

Just ask Jeff Yang, 56, a writer who has spent decades chronicling Asian American communities and culture. When he's asked if the cultural space that Leung inhabits and makes his own sounds like the world of Yang's childhood, he laughs.

"I grew up in a world where I felt like everything about me was projected on me by other people," Yang says. "The stories that were being told were all told by non-Asians about what I could do, who I could be, what I could look like."

It's not as if that world doesn't still exist. Simran Anand, 27, was still part of just one of three South Asian families in Reading, Pennsylvania, growing up in the 2000s. She can relate, she says, to the sense earlier generations had of feeling culturally isolated in her day-to-day life when she stepped out of the family home.

But she had something they lacked — large-scale South Asian communities, like in Edison, New Jersey, where her parents went at least quarterly. A Sikh gurdwara about an hour away where she could learn about her faith. And the option, when she got to college, of choosing a school where she could join thriving South Asian student groups.

For her, it's both-and, not either-or, a sensibility she takes to her jewelry company, BySimran, which she started a couple of years ago to create pieces that drew inspiration from South Asian designs but have been adapted to fit her sensibilities as a young American woman as well.

"I am American, but I'm also South Asian," she says. "And I don't have to be one or the other."

Demetri Manabat, 23, agrees. Born and raised in Las Vegas to a Filipino father and Mexican mother, the spoken word artist readily acknowledges "it sounds like a different world" to hear his parents' experiences growing up.

They didn't teach him or his brothers Tagalog, one of the languages of the Philippines, or Spanish because "they grew up in a time where that was kind of frowned upon to be speaking a different language. And so they were under the assumption that that kind of perception would continue throughout my years, which it didn't."

"I always used to get so mad at my parents like, 'Why don't you teach me a language?' And it wasn't until recently that I was finally kind of able to grasp, it was nothing like it is now."

A new generation emerges, with less self-consciousness

Alex Paik remembers. The 43-year-old Korean American artist came of age in a predominantly white suburb outside of Philadelphia and now lives in Los Angeles. "When I was growing up, it was like I either was not Korean enough or too Korean" — caught between his immigrant parents' standards and the America around him, he says. "I felt like I was trying to measure up to these always moving goalposts."

Today, he's intrigued watching his 11-year-old daughter. "She loves to read, and there's so many stories now that are written by Asian American women that center Asian and Asian American girls as protagonists and I think that's so cool," he says. "I don't know how it would affect your sense of self, but it must affect it somehow, so I'm really curious to see how she grows up … It's just normal for her."

He, Yang, and others point to multiple factors that have impacted the lives of Asian Americans over time, including the demographic reality that there are more, and bigger, communities across the country largely due to the 1965 reform of immigration laws. Globalization has played a hand as well, introducing cultures to each other as the world has gotten smaller. And there's no overstating the role of the internet and technology.

Of course, there have always been those in America's communities of Asian descent willing to be the groundbreakers, the pioneers in politics, protest, business, entertainment, and art. DJ Rekha is among them. In 1997, Rekha started Basement Bhangra, a monthly party at a Manhattan club that would last for 20 years and was the introduction for many to the beats and rhythm of Bhangra, a musical style originating in the Indian subcontinent.

"What I was thinking is not dissimilar from what anyone else who's trying to create something is," Rekha says. "You want to hopefully do things that feel authentic to you, that have an audience who connects with it."

Paik thinks some of what he's seeing in younger generations is also the natural outpouring that comes from a connection to the country that looks different to those born here than it does for immigrants.

"When you start with the assumption that you belong in a space, I feel like that changes how you approach things," he says. "Whether or not that space actually wants you is kind of beside the point. There's an attitude you carry, like, yeah, of course this is my house, this is my country. I grew up here."

And that last statement — "I grew up here" — is the operative engine as new generations of Asian Americans rise and claim their own space — even if the assumptions they make about what's possible for them could be a bit unsettling for other generations.

"Previous generations, of course, they're going to have that kind of like 'what is going on' moment," Manabat says. "I do think that is the goal, to kind of have that moment of 'This is insane,' but it's everything that you kind of hoped would happen."

In short: building the world they want to live in. And not asking for permission.

Happy Lunar New Year!

THE SNAKE SLITHERS IN. *The Lunar New Year, which begins January 29, 2025, marks the Year of the Snake. People born under the sign of the Snake are usually clever, compassionate, and fun-loving. They are generally considered to be determined, gregarious, and honorable individuals who are well-mannered and reflective. They can also have a tendency to be intense and possessive, and can be calculating and cruel. The Year of the Snake ends on February 16, 2026. Pictured is a genetically modified, auspicious white snake on the altar of the Temple of White Snakes in Taoyuan county, Taiwan. (AP Photo/Wally Santana, File)*

What sign are you?

Find the year you were born. Those born in January or February should consult page 12.

1900, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020 — Rat
1901, 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021 — Ox
1902, 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022 — Tiger
1903, 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023 — Rabbit
1904, 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024 — Dragon
1905, 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025 — Snake
1906, 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026 — Horse
1907, 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027 — Sheep
1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028 — Monkey
1909, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029 — Rooster
1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030 — Dog
1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031 — Pig

◆ ◆ ◆

The Gregorian and Chinese lunar calendars

Animal	*Gregorian*	*Chinese*
Snake	January 29, 2025	Year 4723
Horse	February 17, 2026	Year 4724
Sheep	February 6, 2027	Year 4725
Monkey	January 26, 2028	Year 4726
Rooster	February 13, 2029	Year 4727
Dog	February 3, 2030	Year 4728
Pig	January 23, 2031	Year 4729
Rat	February 11, 2032	Year 4730
Ox	January 31, 2033	Year 4731
Tiger	February 19, 2034	Year 4732
Rabbit	February 8, 2035	Year 4733
Dragon	January 28, 2036	Year 4734

A few animal characteristics

Rat: Honest, idealistic, practical, sentimental, argumentative, greedy
Ox: Careful, diligent, eloquent, patient, eccentric, stubborn
Tiger: Ambitious, dynamic, honorable, loyal, critical, impatient
Rabbit: Artistic, considerate, intelligent, peaceful, hesitant, judgemental
Dragon: Energetic, faithful, generous, sincere, defensive, opinionated
Snake: Charitable, elegant, organized, reflective, anxious, possessive
Horse: Calm, confident, independent, talented, contradictory, moody
Sheep: Adaptive, creative, empathetic, polite, impractical, pessimistic
Monkey: Charming, sensitive, vivacious, wise, cunning, selfish
Rooster: Adventurous, courageous, funny, hardworking, cynical, vain
Dog: Brave, devoted, knowledgeable, trustworthy, disagreeable, strict
Pig: Affectionate, cheerful, obliging, optimistic, naïve, snobbish

Read your forecast for the Year of the Snake! Horoscopes by Madame Mingmei begin on page 14.

What is Lunar New Year and how is it celebrated?

By Deepa Bharath
The Associated Press

On January 29, Asian American communities around the U.S. will ring in the Year of the Snake with community carnivals, family gatherings, parades, traditional food, fireworks, and other festivities. In many Asian countries, it is a festival that is celebrated for several days. In diaspora communities, particularly in cultural enclaves, Lunar New Year is visibly and joyfully observed.

According to the Chinese zodiac, 2025 is the Year of the Snake. Different countries across Asia celebrate the new year in many ways and may follow a different zodiac.

What is the Lunar New Year?

The Lunar New Year — known as the Spring Festival in China, Tet in Vietnam, and Seollal in Korea — is a major festival celebrated in several Asian countries. It is also widely celebrated by diaspora communities around the world.

It begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends 15 days later on the first full moon. Because the lunar calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, the dates of the holiday vary slightly each year, falling between late January and mid-February. (Please consult the Lunar Calendar on page 12 for specific dates.)

What are the animals of the zodiac?

Each year honors an animal based on the lunar zodiac. The circle of 12 animals — the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig — measure the cycles of time. Legend has it that a god beckoned all animals to bid him farewell before his departure from earth and only 12 of them showed up. The Vietnamese zodiac is slightly different, honoring the Cat instead of the Rabbit, the Buffalo instead of the Ox, the Ram instead of the Sheep, and the Cock instead of the Rooster. In the Tibetan cycle, the Rat is referred to as the Mouse, the Rabbit is referred to as the Hare, and the Rooster as the Bird.

What are some beliefs and traditions around the Lunar New Year?

One well-known ancient legend speaks of Nian, a hideous monster that feasted on human flesh on New Year's Day. Because the beast feared the color red, loud noises, and fire, people put up red paper dragons on their doors, burned red lanterns all night, and set off firecrackers to frighten and chase away the monster.

To this day, the Lunar New Year celebration is centered around removing bad luck and welcoming all that is good and prosperous. Red is considered an auspicious color to ring in the new year. In many Asian cultures, the color symbolizes good fortune and joy. People dress up in red attire, decorate their homes with red paper lanterns, and use red envelopes to give loved ones and friends money for the new year, symbolizing good wishes for the year ahead. Gambling and playing traditional games is common during this time across cultures.

Ancestor worship is also common during this time. Many Korean families participate in a ritual called "charye," where female family members prepare food and male members serve it to ancestors. The final step of the ceremony, called "eumbok," involves the entire family partaking the food and seeking blessings from their ancestors for the coming year. Vietnamese people cook traditional dishes and place them on a home altar as a mark of respect to their ancestors.

Some Indigenous people also celebrate Lunar New Year this time of year, including members of Mexico's Purepecha Indigenous group.

How do diaspora communities celebrate?

Members of Asian American communities around the U.S. also organize parades, carnivals, and festivities around the Lunar New Year featuring lion and dragon dances, fireworks, traditional food, and cultural performances. In addition to cleaning their homes, many buy new things for their home such as furniture and decorate using orchids and other brightly colored flowers.

Lunar New Year is also celebrated as a cultural event by some Asian American Christians and is observed by several Catholic dioceses across the U.S. as well as

Continued on page 10

The Year of the Snake

The Snake is the sixth animal of the lunar zodiac. Those born under the Snake sign are generally considered to be amusing, charitable, and sympathetic individuals who are perceptive and discreet. They are also known for their tendency to be jealous and can be pessimistic and suspicious.

Wood Snakes

Snakes born between January 29, 2025 and February 16, 2026 are Wood Snakes. The Wood element represents growth and renewal, so many Wood Snakes are wise and easygoing, and enjoy innovative and creative environments. They prefer that few restrictions to be placed on them and often are musicians, poets, painters, or collectors. Similar to many Snakes, Wood Snakes desire a life of luxury and care about their appearance. The Wood Snake was last celebrated 60 years ago in 1965. It will reappear again in 60 years, in 2085.

Snake facts

Year of the Snake: January 29, 2025 and February 16, 2026

Chinese Calendar Year: 4723

Snake Years: 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025

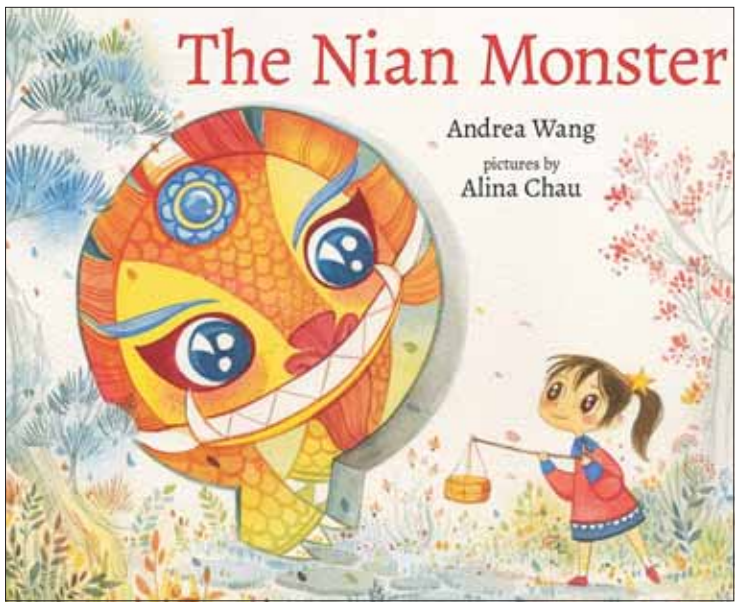
Characteristics: People born under the sign of the Snake are generally considered to be determined, gregarious, and honorable individuals who are well-mannered and reflective. They can also be intense and possessive as well as calculating and cruel.

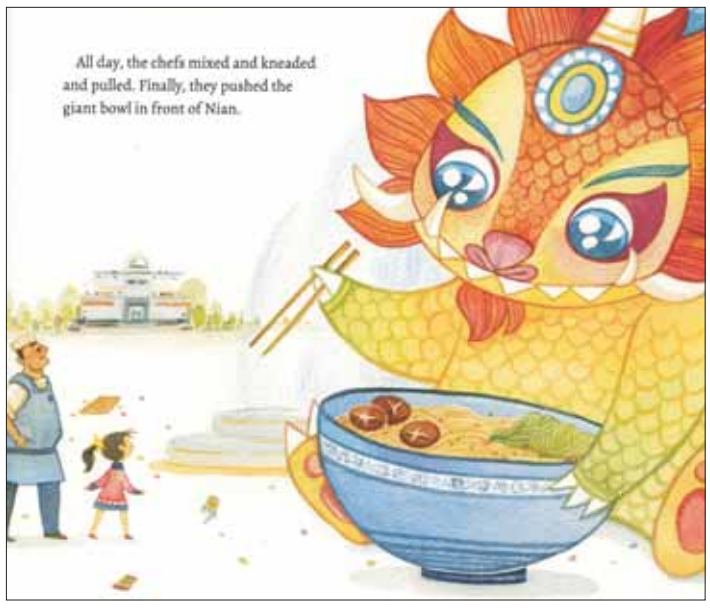
Born in the Year of the Snake: Mohatma Ghandhi, Indira Ghandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Mao Tse-tung, Mom Rajawong Seni Pramoj, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Oprah Winfrey, Alfred Nobel, Pablo Picasso, Anne Rice, Park Jae-sang (Psy), Taylor Swift, and J.K. Rowling.

Young Xingling faces a fierce foe in Andrea Wang's *The Nian Monster*

The Nian Monster
By Andrea Wang
Illustrations by Alina Chau
Albert Whitman & Company, 2024
Paperback, 32 pages, $9.99

By Kathleen Liermann
The Asian Reporter





Andrea Wang's *The Nian Monster* begins in Shanghai three days prior to the Lunar New Year. A market in the city is alive with vendors, families, and vibrant colors drawn by the book's illustrator, Alina Chau.

In the story, readers soon meet Xingling and her grandmother, who are hanging a red lantern — the last of their New Year decorations.

"Po Po, why are they all red," asks Xingling.

Together with Xingling, we learn about the ancient legend of the Nian Monster.

"Long ago," Po Po says, "the Nian Monster lived in the mountains. His jaws were as wide as caverns. His teeth were sharper than swords. And he was filled with a terrible hunger. Each new year, Nian ate whole villages."

Xingling gasped, but was soon reassured by her smiling grandmother: "Every monster has a weakness. Nian had three — loud sounds, fire, and the color red. Our traditions have kept Nian away ever since."

When Po Po leaves to buy more noodles, Xingling takes over in the kitchen, stirring a pot of pork and cabbage, when a horrible beast appears on the balcony.

"Ai ya," Xingling says defiantly to Nian.

Nian roars and growls, "I have come to devour this city!"

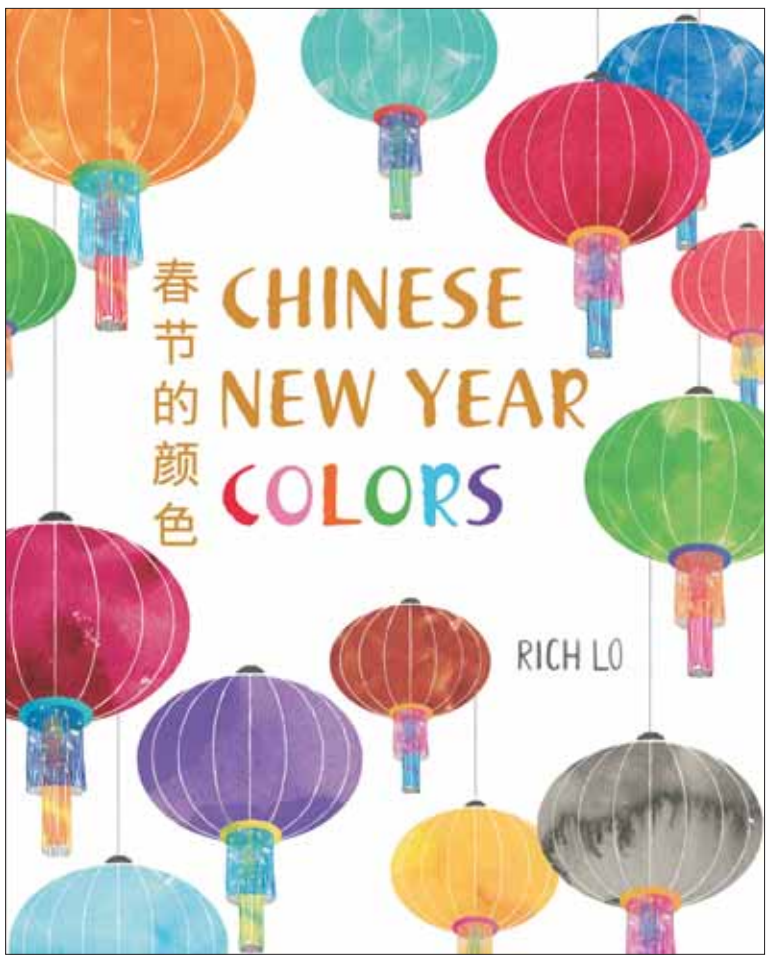
While all the buildings in the city shake from the sounds, Xingling tries to scare away Nian with gongs, drums, and red lanterns and banners to no avail.

Continued on page 11

Author & illustrator Rich Lo teaches young readers about Lunar New Year

Chinese New Year Colors
By Rich Lo
Holiday House, 2022
Paperback, 32 pages, $8.99

By Jody Lim
The Asian Reporter



COLORS OF THE NEW YEAR. *Chinese New Year Colors, a colorful bilingual book by author, illustrator, and fine artist Rich Lo, is aimed at children from preschool through third grade.*

Chinese New Year Colors, by author, illustrator, and fine artist Rich Lo, is a book aimed at children from preschool through third grade. My nephew, a first-grader who is learning to read, and I enjoyed reading the colorful bilingual book together.

The first color we encountered was red — a highly auspicious color which represents celebration, prosperity, good luck, and more — in the form of firecrackers, which are often heard during the New Year and are "believed to scare away evil spirits."

Later, we saw the color gold accompanied by a lucky gold coin, which sometimes has an image of the "zodiac animal for the corresponding year of issue." When asked after finishing the book, which page was his favorite, without hesitation he said "gold!"

Readers are introduced to many colors and items — green and lucky bamboo, pink and a chrysanthemum, purple and the dragon dance, cerulean and the lion dance (which was his second favorite page).

The book is organized in a great way for young readers, with the colors written in English and Mandarin alongside the Lunar New Year objects. Located at the end of the book are explanations for the items, which made for expanded conversations.

Chinese New Year Colors is aimed at youngsters, of course, but all readers are able to learn about Lunar New Year traditions from Rich Lo and his educational book.

What is Lunar New Year and how is it celebrated?

Continued from page 8

other churches.

What are some special foods for the new year?

Each culture has its own list of special foods during the new year, including dumplings, rice cakes, spring rolls, tangerines, fish, and meats. In the Chinese culture, for example, "changshou mian" or "long-life noodles" are consumed with a wish for a long, healthy, and happy life. In Vietnamese culture, banh chung and banh tet — traditional dishes made from glutinous rice — are a must for the celebrations. To make a banh tet, banana leaves are lined with rice, soft mung beans, and pork belly and rolled into a tight log, which is then wrapped in the leaves and tied up with strings. Koreans celebrate with tteokguk, a brothy soup that contains thinly sliced rice cakes.

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Lunar New Year events

"New Years All Year Round"

Currently on display, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View "New Years All Year Round," a fun, family-friendly exhibit that looks at the origins of New Year traditions, colors, cuisine, and more, including lion dances, drums, and firecrackers. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

Japanese New Year celebration

Jan 12, 10am-2:30pm, Portland Japanese Garden (611 SW Kingston Ave, Portland). Ring in the incoming Year of the Snake at *O-Shogatsu*, the traditional Japanese New Year celebration. The family-friendly event includes *sumi-e*, Japanese ink-wash painting (10:00am to 2:30pm); *Edo Kotobuki Jishi*, the celebratory traditional lion dance of Tokyo, performed by Portland Shishimai Kai (10:30am & 1:00pm); a *Ryomen Odori* performance, a double-masked dance (11:30am); and more. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 223-1321 or visit <www.japanesegarden.com>.

Shinnenkai

Jan 16, 6-9pm, Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Attend Shinnenkai, a Japanese New Year Party presented by SakéOne. The event features authentic food and drink, entertainment, activities, *fukubukuro* (lucky bags), a performance by Takohachi, and new year postcard-making. For info, call (503) 552-8811. To buy tickets (advance purchase required), visit <www.jaso.org/2025-calendar>.

2025 Lunar New Year Fair at The Wing

Jan 18, 10am-3pm; 10am (lion dance); 11am (indoor fair opens); Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). Celebrate the Year of the Snake at the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience's family-friendly Lunar New Year Fair. Events include an outdoor lion dance performance by the Mak Fai Kung Fu Dragon and Lion Dance Association, information booths, art activities, storytime, and more. The free outdoor lion dance and speaking program begin at 10:00am. Indoor activities require paid museum admission. Attendees should check in at the white tent with the "pre-check" sign on King Street to obtain entry wristbands. For info, or to purchase timed tickets (highly suggested), call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

Knotting Together Lunar New Year event

Jan 19, 2-3:30pm, Multnomah County Central Library, Large Community Room 1A (801 SW 10th Ave, Portland). Tweens, teens, and adults are invited to Knotting Together, a Lunar New Year-themed event. For info, or to register (required), call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

Tet 2025 at Holgate Library

Jan 22, 5-7pm, Holgate Library, Large Community Rooms 1A + 1B (7905 SE Holgate Blvd, Portland). Youth and families are invited to a Tet celebration featuring crafts, a fashion show, holiday games, and more. For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

Lunar New Year Craft

Jan 25, 10:30am-noon, Cedar Mill Library (1080 NW Saltzman Rd, Portland). Welcome in the Year of the Snake at Cedar Mill Library. People of all ages are invited to create paper lanterns, color snake-themed coloring sheets, and participate in paper cutting. For info, call (503) 644-0043 or visit <https://library.cedarmill.org>.

Continued on page 13

Year of the Snake stamp added to USPS' third series

The third series of Lunar New Year stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) will soon welcome its Year of the Snake stamp. The first-day-of-issue ceremony for the Snake stamp will be held January 14 at the Wang Theatre in Boston.

The Lunar New Year is one of the most important holidays of the year for many Asian communities around the world and is celebrated by people of Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Malaysian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and other heritages.

Millions of people across the globe will mark the Lunar New Year this month by hosting parades and parties, decorating with red and gold lanterns, setting off firecrackers to ward off evil spirits, and inviting family and friends to share traditional foods to welcome the new year. Gifts are also given and houses are cleaned to commemorate this time of renewal.

People born in the Year of the Snake are said to be quiet, wise, and deep-thinking, making them proficient musicians, philosophers, writers, and teachers. The Snake Year is sometimes referred to as the "Little Dragon Year" because it follows the Dragon on the zodiac. In 2025, we welcome the Year of the Wood Snake, which

SSSNAKES SSSURFACE. *A new Year of the Snake stamp (left image) is part of a third series of Lunar New Year stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service. Previous Snake stamps were issued in 2001 (top right) and 2013 (bottom right). (Images courtesy of the U.S. Postal Service)*

begins January 29, 2025 and ends February 16, 2026.

The 2025 Snake stamp features a green 3-dimensional mask of a snake, a contemporary take on the long tradition of paper-cut folk-art crafts created during this festive time of year. Created by artist Camille Chew, the stamp is a forever stamp, meaning it will always be equal in value to the current first-class mail one-ounce price.

Lunar New Year stamps began in 1992

The very first USPS Lunar New Year stamp was issued in 1992 and represented the Year of the Rooster. Worth 29 cents, the stamp had a paper-cut two-dimensional look in addition to *kanji* characters written by a professional calligrapher. The remaining 11 animals in the lunar zodiac followed each year.

The initial series was completed with the issuance of the Year of the Monkey stamp, which was later followed with a pane of stamps featuring all 12 animals.

Late artist Clarence Lee, an American of Chinese descent who was born in Honolulu, designed the original USPS series.

Second series released in 2008

Following the conclusion of the first series of stamps, members of the Asian community urged USPS to continue its issuance of Lunar New Year stamps annually, which led to a second set that was called the Celebrating Lunar New Year series.

Instead of illustrating the zodiac animals in the new series, artist Kam Mak

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Young Xingling faces a fierce foe in Andrea Wang's *The Nian Monster*

Continued from page 9

"You will make a tasty appetizer," Nian says to the girl, licking its lips.

Xingling tries to delay the scary monster: "Have a bowl of long-life noodles first."

Nian replies: "You are wise, little one. Noodles first, then you, then the city."

Xingling enlists the best noodle shop in town to create the dish, which delays the monster. "My stomach is too stuffed to eat more … I will devour the city tomorrow," Nian groans.

Upon Nian's return the next day, brave Xingling yells at the monster, "Wait! Eat fish first so you will have a good fortune all year long."

Nian again replies: "You are wise, little one. Fish first, then you, then the city."

Xingling enlists the best fishing fleet in Shanghai to catch milkfish for the hungry monster, to which Nian concludes, "I will devour the city tomorrow."

The next morning, Nian's wide, wicked jaws confront Xingling yet again, to which the girl says, "Tonight is New Year's Eve. You need some rice cakes to sweeten your future."

"You are wise, little one. Rice cakes first, then you, then the city," says Nian.

Do the rice cakes send Nian away for another year? Are firecrackers successful in concluding the old year in order to allow the welcoming of the new one? Will dancing dragons appear?

To find out if Xingling is able to expel Nian, readers must check out a copy of Andrea Wang and Alina Chau's *The Nian Monster*, which is an adorable and entertaining way to introduce young ones to the traditions of the Lunar New Year.

LUNAR CALENDAR

When were you born?

Look up your date of birth to find out what sign and element apply to you!

Jan. 31, 1900 to Feb. 18, 1901 — Metal Rat
Feb. 19, 1901 to Feb. 07, 1902 — Metal Ox
Feb. 08, 1902 to Jan. 28, 1903 — Water Tiger
Jan. 29, 1903 to Feb. 15, 1904 — Water Rabbit
Feb. 16, 1904 to Feb. 03, 1905 — Wood Dragon
Feb. 04, 1905 to Jan. 24, 1906 — Wood Snake
Jan. 25, 1906 to Feb. 12, 1907 — Fire Horse
Feb. 13, 1907 to Feb. 01, 1908 — Fire Sheep
Feb. 02, 1908 to Jan. 21, 1909 — Earth Monkey
Jan. 22, 1909 to Feb. 09, 1910 — Earth Rooster

Feb. 10, 1910 to Jan. 29, 1911 — Metal Dog
Jan. 30, 1911 to Feb. 17, 1912 — Metal Pig
Feb. 18, 1912 to Feb. 05, 1913 — Water Rat
Feb. 06, 1913 to Jan. 25, 1914 — Water Ox
Jan. 26, 1914 to Feb. 13, 1915 — Wood Tiger
Feb. 14, 1915 to Feb. 02, 1916 — Wood Rabbit
Feb. 03, 1916 to Jan. 22, 1917 — Fire Dragon
Jan. 23, 1917 to Feb. 10, 1918 — Fire Snake
Feb. 11, 1918 to Jan. 31, 1919 — Earth Horse
Feb. 01, 1919 to Feb. 19, 1920 — Earth Sheep

Feb. 20, 1920 to Feb. 07, 1921 — Metal Monkey
Feb. 08, 1921 to Jan. 27, 1922 — Metal Rooster
Jan. 28, 1922 to Feb. 15, 1923 — Water Dog
Feb. 16, 1923 to Feb. 04, 1924 — Water Pig
Feb. 05, 1924 to Jan. 24, 1925 — Wood Rat
Jan. 25, 1925 to Feb. 12, 1926 — Wood Ox
Feb. 13, 1926 to Feb. 01, 1927 — Fire Tiger
Feb. 02, 1927 to Jan. 22, 1928 — Fire Rabbit
Jan. 23, 1928 to Feb. 09, 1929 — Earth Dragon
Feb. 10, 1929 to Jan. 29, 1930 — Earth Snake

Jan. 30, 1930 to Feb. 16, 1931 — Metal Horse
Feb. 17, 1931 to Feb. 05, 1932 — Metal Sheep
Feb. 06, 1932 to Jan. 25, 1933 — Water Monkey
Jan. 26, 1933 to Feb. 13, 1934 — Water Rooster
Feb. 14, 1934 to Feb. 03, 1935 — Wood Dog
Feb. 04, 1935 to Jan. 23, 1936 — Wood Pig
Jan. 24, 1936 to Feb. 10, 1937 — Fire Rat
Feb. 11, 1937 to Jan. 30, 1938 — Fire Ox
Jan. 31, 1938 to Feb. 18, 1939 — Earth Tiger
Feb. 19, 1939 to Feb. 07, 1940 — Earth Rabbit

Feb. 08, 1940 to Jan. 26, 1941 — Metal Dragon
Jan. 27, 1941 to Feb. 14, 1942 — Metal Snake
Feb. 15, 1942 to Feb. 04, 1943 — Water Horse
Feb. 05, 1943 to Jan. 24, 1944 — Water Sheep
Jan. 25, 1944 to Feb. 12, 1945 — Wood Monkey
Feb. 13, 1945 to Feb. 01, 1946 — Wood Rooster
Feb. 02, 1946 to Jan. 21, 1947 — Fire Dog
Jan. 22, 1947 to Feb. 09, 1948 — Fire Pig
Feb. 10, 1948 to Jan. 28, 1949 — Earth Rat
Jan. 29, 1949 to Feb. 16, 1950 — Earth Ox

Feb. 17, 1950 to Feb. 05, 1951 — Metal Tiger
Feb. 06, 1951 to Jan. 26, 1952 — Metal Rabbit
Jan. 27, 1952 to Feb. 13, 1953 — Water Dragon
Feb. 14, 1953 to Feb. 02, 1954 — Water Snake
Feb. 03, 1954 to Jan. 23, 1955 — Wood Horse
Jan. 24, 1955 to Feb. 11, 1956 — Wood Sheep
Feb. 12, 1956 to Jan. 30, 1957 — Fire Monkey
Jan. 31, 1957 to Feb. 17, 1958 — Fire Rooster
Feb. 18, 1958 to Feb. 07, 1959 — Earth Dog
Feb. 08, 1959 to Jan. 27, 1960 — Earth Pig

Jan. 28, 1960 to Feb. 14, 1961 — Metal Rat
Feb. 15, 1961 to Feb. 04, 1962 — Metal Ox
Feb. 05, 1962 to Jan. 24, 1963 — Water Tiger
Jan. 25, 1963 to Feb. 12, 1964 — Water Rabbit
Feb. 13, 1964 to Feb. 01, 1965 — Wood Dragon
Feb. 02, 1965 to Jan. 20, 1966 — Wood Snake
Jan. 21, 1966 to Feb. 08, 1967 — Fire Horse
Feb. 09, 1967 to Jan. 29, 1968 — Fire Sheep
Jan. 30, 1968 to Feb. 16, 1969 — Earth Monkey
Feb. 17, 1969 to Feb. 05, 1970 — Earth Rooster

Feb. 06, 1970 to Jan. 26, 1971 — Metal Dog
Jan. 27, 1971 to Jan. 14, 1972 — Metal Pig
Jan. 15, 1972 to Feb. 02, 1973 — Water Rat
Feb. 03, 1973 to Jan. 22, 1974 — Water Ox
Jan. 23, 1974 to Feb. 10, 1975 — Wood Tiger
Feb. 11, 1975 to Jan. 30, 1976 — Wood Rabbit
Jan. 31, 1976 to Feb. 17, 1977 — Fire Dragon
Feb. 18, 1977 to Feb. 06, 1978 — Fire Snake
Feb. 07, 1978 to Jan. 27, 1979 — Earth Horse
Jan. 28, 1979 to Feb. 15, 1980 — Earth Sheep

Feb. 16, 1980 to Feb. 04, 1981 — Metal Monkey
Feb. 05, 1981 to Jan. 24, 1982 — Metal Rooster
Jan. 25, 1982 to Feb. 12, 1983 — Water Dog
Feb. 13, 1983 to Feb. 01, 1984 — Water Pig
Feb. 02, 1984 to Feb. 19, 1985 — Wood Rat
Feb. 20, 1985 to Feb. 08, 1986 — Wood Ox
Feb. 09, 1986 to Jan. 28, 1987 — Fire Tiger
Jan. 29, 1987 to Feb. 16, 1988 — Fire Rabbit
Feb. 17, 1988 to Feb. 05, 1989 — Earth Dragon
Feb. 06, 1989 to Jan. 26, 1990 — Earth Snake

Jan. 27, 1990 to Feb. 14, 1991 — Metal Horse
Feb. 15, 1991 to Feb. 03, 1992 — Metal Sheep
Feb. 04, 1992 to Jan. 22, 1993 — Water Monkey
Jan. 23, 1993 to Feb. 09, 1994 — Water Rooster
Feb. 10, 1994 to Jan. 30, 1995 — Wood Dog
Jan. 31, 1995 to Feb. 18, 1996 — Wood Pig
Feb. 19, 1996 to Feb. 07, 1997 — Fire Rat
Feb. 08, 1997 to Jan. 27, 1998 — Fire Ox
Jan. 28, 1998 to Feb. 05, 1999 — Earth Tiger
Feb. 06, 1999 to Feb. 04, 2000 — Earth Rabbit

Feb. 05, 2000 to Jan. 23, 2001 — Metal Dragon
Jan. 24, 2001 to Feb. 11, 2002 — Metal Snake
Feb. 12, 2002 to Jan. 31, 2003 — Water Horse
Feb. 01, 2003 to Jan. 21, 2004 — Water Sheep
Jan. 22, 2004 to Feb. 08, 2005 — Wood Monkey
Feb. 09, 2005 to Jan. 28, 2006 — Wood Rooster
Jan. 29, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2007 — Fire Dog
Feb. 18, 2007 to Feb. 06, 2008 — Fire Pig
Feb. 07, 2008 to Jan. 25, 2009 — Earth Rat
Jan. 26, 2009 to Feb. 13, 2010 — Earth Ox

Feb. 14, 2010 to Feb. 02, 2011 — Metal Tiger
Feb. 03, 2011 to Jan. 22, 2012 — Metal Rabbit
Jan. 23, 2012 to Feb. 09, 2013 — Water Dragon
Feb. 10, 2013 to Jan. 30, 2014 — Water Snake
Jan. 31, 2014 to Feb. 18, 2015 — Wood Horse
Feb. 19, 2015 to Feb. 07, 2016 — Wood Sheep
Feb. 08, 2016 to Jan. 27, 2017 — Fire Monkey
Jan. 28, 2017 to Feb. 15, 2018 — Fire Rooster
Feb. 16, 2018 to Feb. 04, 2019 — Earth Dog
Feb. 05, 2019 to Jan. 24, 2020 — Earth Pig

Jan. 25, 2020 to Feb. 11, 2021 — Metal Rat
Feb. 12, 2021 to Jan. 31, 2022 — Metal Ox
Feb. 01, 2022 to Jan. 21, 2023 — Water Tiger
Jan. 22, 2023 to Feb. 09, 2024 — Water Rabbit
Feb. 10, 2024 to Jan. 28, 2025 — Wood Dragon
Jan. 29, 2025 to Feb. 16, 2026 — Wood Snake
Feb. 17, 2026 to Feb. 05, 2027 — Fire Horse
Feb. 06, 2027 to Jan. 25, 2028 — Fire Sheep

The staff at The Asian Reporter wish you and your family a safe and happy Lunar New Year!

Lunar New Year events

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Lunar New Year 2025

Jan 25, 11am-1pm, Hillsboro Public Library, Brookwood (2850 NE Brookwood Pkwy, Hillsboro, Ore.). Celebrate Lunar New Year 2025 — the Year of the Snake — at the Hillsboro Public Library on Brookwood. Lunar New Year, also known as Spring Festival or Chinese New Year, is the biggest and most important celebration in many countries throughout Asia and across the globe. For info, call (503) 615-6500 or visit <www.hillsboro-oregon.gov/our-city/departments/library>.

Tet 2025 at Gregory Heights Library

Jan 25, 2-3:30pm, Gregory Heights Library (7921 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland). Youth, families, and adults are invited to a Tet celebration featuring calligraphy, singing, dancing, and more. For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

Tet in Seattle

Jan 25-26, Seattle Center (305 Harrison St, Seattle). Attend *Tet Nguyen Dan* — the Vietnamese New Year — presented by Seattle Center Festál in partnership with Tet in Seattle. Tet in Seattle 2025 ushers in the Lunar New Year with a lion dance, performances, a fashion show, a health fair, vendors, and more, in celebration of the Year of the Snake. For info and hours, call (206) 684-7200, or visit <www.tetinseattle.org> or <www.seattlecenter.com>.

Lion dances at Uwajimaya

Jan 25, Jan 26 & Feb 2; Jan 25, noon, Seattle Uwajimaya (600 Fifth Ave S, Seattle); Jan 26, noon, Bellevue Uwajimaya (699 120th Ave NE, Bellevue, Wash.); Feb 2, 1:30pm, Uwajimaya Plaza (10500 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy, Beaverton, Ore.); TBA, Renton Uwajimaya (501 South Grady Way, Renton, Wash.). Visit your area Uwajimaya to experience a lion dance performance, a celebration aimed at bringing good luck, happiness, and a fresh start in the year ahead. For info, call (206) 624-6248 (Seattle), (425) 747-9012 (Bellevue), (503) 643-4512 (Beaverton), or (425) 277-1635 (Renton), or visit <www.uwajimaya.com>.

Lunar New Year celebration at Milwaukie Community Center

Jan 26, 1-3:30pm, Milwaukie Community Center (5440 SE Kellogg Creek Dr, Milwaukie, Ore.). Usher out the old year and welcome prosperity into the new year at the Milwaukie Community Center. The 2025 Lunar New Year celebration features a live lion dance performance, interactive activities, crafts, music, and more. Participants are able to drop in anytime. For info, call (503) 653-8100 or visit <www.ncprd.com/event/lunar-new-year>.

"Craft Your Own Lion Dance Head"

Jan 26, 2-4pm, Midland Library, Large Community Rooms 1A + 1B (805 SE 122nd Ave, Portland). Get ready for the Lunar New Year by creating a lion dance head. Participants of all ages are invited to attend and Midland Library provides the craft supplies needed. Celebrants are also invited to bring their new creation to the Lunar New Year celebration on Sunday, February 2, which features the White Lotus Dragon & Lion Dance Team. The craft event is able to accommodate up to 80 people. For info, or to register (suggested), call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

CELEBRATING THE SERPENT. *The Lunar New Year Family Festival at the Seattle Asian Art Museum takes place February 1 from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The family-friendly day welcomes the Year of the Snake and includes lion dances, activities, storytime, and more. (Photo/Jen Au)*

The Orchid Trio

Jan 26, 3-4pm, Woodstock Library (6008 SE 49th Ave, Portland). Attend a free concert by The Orchid Trio in celebration of the Lunar New Year. The Orchid Trio features traditional music from many regions of China performed by violinist Siying Ge, violist Deborah Shuster, and cellist Quinn Liu. For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

Lunar New Year at Lan Su

Jan 29-Feb 23 (daily), 10am-4pm, Lan Su Chinese Garden (239 NW Everett St, Portland). Ring in the Lunar New Year — the Year of the Snake — with lion dances, cultural performances, festival decorations, family craft activities, storytime, Chinese calligraphy demonstrations, "Sssslither Into The New Year" Creature Teacher meet-and-greets, and more at Lan Su Chinese Garden. Another highlight of the celebration is Lunar New Year Lantern Viewing — illuminated hanging red lanterns

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Year of the Snake forecasts

We hope you enjoy Madame Mingmei's Year of the Snake forecasts.

The first prediction applies to each animal sign (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig) for the new lunar year.

Each prediction is followed by an additional forecast specific to one's element (metal, water, wood, fire, earth).

To find out what sign and element apply to you, turn to page 12 and look up your date of birth.

By Madame Mingmei

Special to The Asian Reporter

The Rat

Following a Dragon Year with some obstacles, a compassionate and dynamic Rat should experience good fortune in 2025. Honest, imaginative, and open-minded Rats will scamper across plenty of opportunities, but a greedy, self-obsessed one will not. The year will bring with it some challenges, but staying your patient and practical self will help in overcoming any issues.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Rat**: Focusing on good health is an important goal in 2025.

■ **Water Rat**: The practical Water Rat should focus on a specific skill to create a solid foundation for the future.

■ **Wood Rat**: Stay on top of your expenses and make an effort to save funds for a rainy day.

■ **Fire Rat**: Help raise up those around you. Your efforts will not only help them, but also bring you joy and satisfaction.

■ **Earth Rat**: Opportunity may come knocking; be sure to act promptly after consulting a trusted friend.

◆

The Ox

After weathering some obstacles in 2024, the Year of the Snake should be good in many ways for a careful, clear-thinking, and confident Ox. Those who are hardworking and organized would be wise to obtain the advice of friends and elders periodically. Remember to be cautious partaking in adventures and finish all tasks that are started. Practical and serious Oxen should avoid judging others too quickly.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Ox**: Work on listening to others in 2025.

■ **Water Ox**: Adaptable Water Oxen should surround themselves with positive people.

■ **Wood Ox**: Wood Oxen are advised to read a lot to acquire more knowledge.

■ **Fire Ox**: Working on consistency is a good goal.

■ **Earth Ox**: Leaning on your creativity may lead to new opportunities.

◆

The Tiger

Ambitious and loyal Tigers should see positive developments this year following a mostly rewarding 2024, as long as good strategies and goals are put in place. Avoid being impatient or hotheaded and remember to pay attention to everyone and everything around you. Hard work will be rewarded during the Snake Year as long as you keep a positive attitude and are respectful of others.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Tiger**: Try to keep emotions in check, Metal Tiger, to avoid bad situations.

■ **Water Tiger**: The determined Water Tiger should use 2025 to solidify their sense of security and stability.

■ **Wood Tiger**: The top priority for Wood Tigers is to focus on both starting and finishing all projects.

■ **Fire Tiger**: Remain ambitious, as always, but avoid being stubborn.

■ **Earth Tiger**: During this Snake Year, a good goal is to work on thinking clearly.

◆

The Rabbit

After experiencing a Dragon Year with good fortune, 2025 will bring both success and struggles. Hospitable, sensitive, and principled Rabbits should hop to new opportunities and challenges after consulting friends and family. When considering new friendships and relationships, avoid being gossipy, judgemental, or self-centered. Well-mannered and considerate Rabbits should gnaw on a new hobby.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Rabbit**: Diplomatic Metal Rabbits may nibble on success in 2025.

■ **Water Rabbit**: The Year of the Snake may present many activities to keep you very busy.

■ **Wood Rabbit**: Having patience with others will reap many rewards.

■ **Fire Rabbit**: Burrow out of your comfort zone and plan something with others rather than alone.

■ **Earth Rabbit**: The hospitable Earth Rabbit should volunteer their time this Snake Year.

◆

The Dragon

After celebrating your year in 2024, which was filled with many opportunities, dynamic and energetic Dragons should find success in 2025 if they avoid being defensive or impatient. Make smart, informed choices where money is involved and spend time and energy on long-held goals. The Snake Year is a good one to expand your knowledge and learn a new skill.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Dragon**: Be generous this Year of the Snake when helping out a friend.

■ **Water Dragon**: Work on being patient with other people and provide assistance, if possible.

■ **Wood Dragon**: Throw caution aside this Snake Year and focus on an educational opportunity.

■ **Fire Dragon**: Fire up your energy when a friend or family member asks for a favor.

■ **Earth Dragon**: Being decisive will benefit Earth Dragons in 2025.

◆

The Snake

It's your year and it's time to get busy taking on new opportunities and experiences. The curious and fun-loving Snake should see success as long as they are determined and not judgemental. You've waited 12 long years for 2025, so don't throw your wisdom or organizational skills to the wind when presented with a new challenge.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Snake**: Stay on top of issues that may slither into view.

■ **Water Snake**: Your Snake Year should present good opportunities to blossom and grow.

■ **Wood Snake**: Draw on your independence and try something new in the coming months.

■ **Fire Snake**: Productive Fire Snakes may encounter an interesting year.

■ **Earth Snake**: Perceptive Earth Snakes should consider expanding their social circle.

◆

The Horse

Luck appears in store for generous, sincere, and energetic Horses, but careless or moody ones may not have the same result. Those who are enterprising and enthusiastic will see promising opportunities cross their trail and those who obtain new skills will also be rewarded. During the Snake Year, make an extra effort to be active in order to maintain good health.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Horse**: Confidence is the key to success during the Year of the Snake.

■ **Water Horse**: Utilize your social skills to help a stranger or friend.

■ **Wood Horse**: Your problem-solving skills will come in handy in 2025.

■ **Fire Horse**: Always give your best to make each day a little better for those around you.

■ **Earth Horse**: Take a moment to enjoy the fruits of your hard work and dedication.

◆

The Sheep

Following an up-and-down 2024, adaptable and creative Sheep should find success and a sense of accomplishment during the Snake Year. Generous and honest Sheep may even be presented with a unique opportunity. Sound financial decisions should be a top priority, so be frugal when making purchases. Keeping an optimistic attitude is also key, lest you shear off good chances by being irrational.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Sheep**: The Year of the Snake should be a fun, positive time for Metal Sheep who are generous.

■ **Water Sheep**: Impulsive Water Sheep should try to keep their emotions in check.

■ **Wood Sheep**: Set aside your insecurities and try a new hobby.

■ **Fire Sheep**: Think more innovatively this year.

■ **Earth Sheep**: Paying attention to your health is a great goal.

◆

The Monkey

After a pretty good Dragon Year, 2025 is looking mostly lucky for the charming, cooperative, and generous Monkey. Remember to stay your inventive and creative self in order to swing over any obstacle. Monkeys who stay socially active may put themselves in a position to attain a long-term goal. If a good opportunity falls into your path, first evaluate it, then seize on it.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Monkey**: Having patience, Metal Monkey, will yield productive results.

■ **Water Monkey**: Vivacious Water Monkeys should enjoy an active social life in 2025.

■ **Wood Monkey**: Optimism and independence are important characteristics to have during this Snake Year.

■ **Fire Monkey**: Wise Fire Monkeys should take advantage of a potentially productive year.

■ **Earth Monkey**: Enthusiasm is necessary to obtain success in the coming months.

◆

The Rooster

After a mostly fun and productive 2024, Roosters should have good luck in 2025 as long as they utilize their adventurous, brave, and communicative traits. Hard-working and loyal Roosters will have a chance to break through on a long-sought goal. Good health is possible for those who are relaxed and thoughtful, but in jeopardy for Roosters who might be thoughtless and self-absorbed.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Rooster**: Reach out to those around you to realize real progress.

■ **Water Rooster**: Water Roosters should use their enthusiastic nature to benefit a good cause.

■ **Wood Rooster**: Prompt Wood Roosters will peck away at unexpected challenges and prevail.

■ **Fire Rooster**: Fire Roosters should embrace their courage to achieve their goals.

■ **Earth Rooster**: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle may help keep your mind on track.

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Have a safe and prosperous Year of the Snake!

Lunar New Year events

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HAPPY NEW YEAR! *The Lunar New Year Dragon Dance Parade & Celebration begins at 10:00am on Saturday, February 8 in Portland's Chinatown. The day of festivities conclude at 1:00pm at the Oregon Historical Society Museum. (Photos/Jeff Lee Photography)*

and large lantern sculptures — which is held during the evening from January 29 through February 16 (separate admission tickets are required). For info, to obtain a complete schedule of activities, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 228-8131 or visit <www.lansugarden.org>.

Chinese Lantern Making

Jan 31, 6-7pm, Friendly House (1737 NW 26th Ave, Portland). Ring in the Lunar New Year with Friendly House at a free Chinese Lantern Making event. Participants create paper lanterns (called Denglong), learn about the history of the holiday, and enjoy traditional Asian snacks. For info, call (503) 228-4391, e-mail <frontdesk@fhpdx.org>, or visit <www.fhpdx.org>.

Lunar New Year Family Festival

Feb 1, 11am-2pm, Seattle Asian Art Museum, Fuller Garden Court (1400 E Prospect St, in Volunteer Park, Seattle). Celebrate the Lunar New Year at the Seattle Asian Art Museum's (SAAM) Family Festival, a family-friendly day featuring lion dances, activities, storytime, and more. SAAM is ringing in the Year of the Wood Snake with a live lion dance at 11:00am, presented by the Lieu Quan Lion Dance team; an illustrated storytime and craft with artist Julie Kim at 11:30am; a wood snake community sculpture designed by local artists Monyee Chau and Jae Eun Kim; a photo booth; dumplings, edamame, and beverages available for purchase from 11:00am to 2:00pm; and a free outdoor lion dance performance by Mak Fai Lion Dance at 1:30pm. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 654-3100 or visit <www.seattleartmuseum.org>.

Chinese New Year Cultural Fair

Feb 1, 11am-5pm, Oregon Convention Center (777 NE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Portland). Celebrate the Year of the Snake at the Chinese New Year Cultural Fair. The daylong event includes traditional and modern Chinese cultural activities; Chinese folk dance and music; booths offering food, beverages, products, and services; calligraphy; martial arts demonstrations; children's games; and more. For info, or to obtain the full schedule of events, call (503) 771-9560 or (503) 888-6298, or visit <www.portlandchinesetimes.com>.

Oregon 2025 Lunar New Year Gala

Feb 1, 5pm (art & craft activities begin), 7:30pm (performances), Keller Auditorium (222 SW Clay St, Portland). Attend the Oregon 2025 Lunar New Year Gala, an all-ages celebration presented by the Chinese Friendship Association of Portland featuring art and craft activities, entertainment, and more. Performances include comedian Joe Wong, a Peony Flower Dance, martial arts, rhythmic gymnastics, a dance drama, vocalists, and more. For info, or to purchase tickets (seating is reserved), call (503) 248-4335, or visit <www.portland5.com>. To buy group tickets, call (971) 865-7889 or visit <www.portlandcfa.org>.

Lunar New Year celebration at Midland Library

Feb 2, 1-3:30pm, Midland Library, Gathering Circle & Large Community Rooms 1A + 1B (805 SE 122nd Ave, Portland). Celebrate the Lunar New Year at Midland Library. The all-ages event features calligraphy lessons, a fashion show, music, the White Lotus Dragon & Lion Dance Team, and more. For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

"Celebrate with Creative Crafts"

Feb 4, 4-7pm, Holgate Library, Large Community Room 2A (7905 SE Holgate Blvd, Portland). Welcome the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Snake, at "Celebrate with Creative Crafts." Youth and families are invited to make a sticker, t-shirt, or bag design using a Silhouette Cameo vinyl cutting machine and a heat press. Other creative materials and 3D pens are also available. For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

Lunar New Year Dragon Dance Parade & Celebration

Feb 8, 10am-1pm, NW Davis Street near the Portland Chinatown Museum (127 NW Third Ave, Portland). Kick off the Lunar New Year with a mile-long parade in Portland coordinated by the Oregon Historical Society and numerous community partners. The Lunar New Year Dragon Dance Parade & Celebration starts at 10:00am near the Portland Chinatown Museum with lion dancers, drummers, performances, and a 150-foot dragon, followed by a parade (11:00am to 12:30pm) that marches under the China Gate and through downtown Portland along SW Third Avenue to the outdoor plaza at the Oregon Historical Society Museum (1200 SW Park Ave, Portland) for a joyous conclusion. Plucking of the greens occurs at select locations along the parade route. Members of the community who are interested in volunteering for the event should e-mail <info@portlandchinatown.org>. For info, call (503) 222-1741 or (503) 224-0008, or visit <www.ohs.org> or <www.portlandchinatownmuseum.org>.

TET in Oregon 2025

Feb 8, 10:30am-5pm, McDaniel High School (2735 NE 82nd Ave, Portland). Attend TET in Oregon, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Festival. The celebration, presented by the Vietnamese Community of Oregon, features lucky red envelopes, a dragon dance, music performances, traditional dance, vendors, and much more. An evening program is also presented from 6:00pm to 10:00pm. For info, call (503) 349-9232, e-mail <thaotvnco@gmail.com>, or visit <www.facebook.com/vncousa>.

VCA Lunar New Year Gala

Feb 16, 5-7pm (light meal & activities), 7-9pm (performances), Skyview High School (1300 NW 139th St, Vancouver, Wash.). Enjoy food, performances, games for children, crafts, and more at the Vancouver Chinese Association's (VCA) Lunar New Year Gala. For info, or to purchase tickets (required), e-mail <vca_usa@yahoo.com>, or visit <https://vca-wa.org> or <www.facebook.com/vcausa>. Businesses selling tickets in person include Ocean King Market, Szechuan Brothers Chinese Restaurant, Makoto Japanese Buffet, and the Canton Chinese Buffet.

An online version of this Lunar New Year special issue is available at <www.asianreporter.com>

Have a safe and prosperous Year of the Snake!

January 29, 2025 to February 16, 2026

Year of the Snake forecasts

Continued from page 14

The Dog

Brave and devoted Dogs will be presented with many good opportunities in 2025, as long as they are imaginative and loyal. Achievements and praise will follow those who play ball fairly and are not bad-tempered. Keep control of your expenses and be sure to get plenty of rest and exercise so you can enjoy a busy Snake Year.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Dog**: Although learning might be rough this year, make an effort to obtain new skills.

■ **Water Dog**: Dig up and explore new experiences this Snake Year.

■ **Wood Dog**: Avoiding trivial situations could help in achieving a goal.

■ **Fire Dog**: Fire Dogs should heel occasionally and allow others a chance to lead.

■ **Earth Dog**: The talkative Earth Dog should bark enthusiastically at everyone in 2025.

◆

The Pig

A rocky road may be in store for an impatient and indulgent Pig, but one who is courteous, sensible, and honest should be able to navigate the year. Utilizing good communication skills and your outgoing personality will help overcome any barriers in your way. Enjoy mud baths when you have a chance, but don't over-indulge financially because saving for a rainy day is a good idea.

Element specific:

■ **Metal Pig**: Outgoing Metal Pigs may need to assist a friend seeking advice.

■ **Water Pig**: Put good ideas to work by collaborating with others.

■ **Wood Pig**: Focus on realistic goals this Snake Year.

■ **Fire Pig**: Zeroing in on important tasks will lead to individual satisfaction.

■ **Earth Pig**: Earth Pigs may be presented with a chance to travel in the future, so start saving funds now.

Illustrations by Jonathan Hill

We hope you enjoy Madame Mingmei's Year of the Snake forecasts.

The first prediction applies to each animal sign (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig) for the new lunar year.

Each prediction is followed by an additional forecast specific to one's element (metal, water, wood, fire, earth).

To find out what sign and element apply to you, turn to page 12 and look up your date of birth.

Year of the Snake stamp added to USPS' third series

Continued from page 11

created symbolic objects of Lunar New Year celebrations — red lanterns (2008), lion head (2009), narcissus flowers (2010), kumquats (2011), dragon (2012), firecrackers (2013), drums (2014), Tray of Togetherness (2015), peonies (2016), red envelope (2017), lucky bamboo (2018), and pink peach blossoms (2019).

The first stamp, issued in honor of the Year of the Rat, was released in 2008. Each new stamp in the Celebrating Lunar New Year series featured small animal illustrations in a traditional paper-cutout style, by Lee, the artist who created the first stamp series that began in 1992, in the upper left corner. Mak designed the series with art director Ethel Kessler.

The third series began in 2020 and will conclude in 2031.

To learn more, or to purchase the new Year of the Snake stamp, call 1-800-STAMP24 (1-800-782-6724) or visit <www.usps.com/stamps>.

Winter can be a time of culinary abundance. Experts share tips on eating nutritiously.

By Devi Shastri
AP Health Writer

"WINTERIZING" MEALS. *A serving of tomato vegetable soup is seen at Madison Spring Hut in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty, File)*

Winter has settled in across much of the U.S., erasing the freshness and vibrancy of months past.

But the chilly season doesn't have to usher in weeks of lifeless, colorless dinner plates.

Dieticians and food experts say winter is a great time to experiment with your food, try out underappreciated seasonal produce, and cook a healthy meal for loved ones.

"Embrace the cold, embrace the winter, and appreciate the bounty," said Kristen Rasmussen, a culinary dietician and chef who teaches at the University of California, Berkeley.

Here are tips from nutrition experts on how to "winterize" your meals.

Any produce is good produce — fresh, frozen, canned, or dried

Only 1 in 10 Americans eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day, data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows.

Staple fruits and vegetables are generally available year-around in the grocery store, but it's also peak season for certain types of produce.

Citrus fruits are among those fresh in winter — lemons, limes, oranges, and more. When it comes to root vegetables, pull sweet potatoes and pumpkin out of Thanksgiving desserts and into savory meals and snacks. Try out parsnips, beets, and radishes, too.

And don't forget those winter greens: Rasmussen recommends including more members of the chicory family like radicchio, escarole, and endive. (These can be on the bitter side, so they might be an acquired taste.) You can also test out different types of kale and the leafy tops of root vegetables, like radish greens.

If fresh options are limited, experts say canned and frozen fruits and vegetables still have a lot of nutritional value, as long as you don't overcook them. Also make sure they don't have a lot of added salt or fat.

Dried fruits — think apricots, dates, and raisins — and nuts are also great to bring into salads, bakes, and more.

"Without a doubt, there's a lot of nutritional benefit, even in dried (fruits)," said Linda Van Horn, a clinical nutrition epidemiologist at Northwestern University.

For a cozy meal, how about a humble stew, soup, or porridge?

Soups, stews, and porridges span history and cultures. They are a great way to build out a well-rounded meal. They're also easily adaptable to any flavor palate, easy to make, and great to freeze.

Plus, you can throw just about anything in them.

"The benefit of it is that it's all contained," Van Horn said, noting nutrients that leak out of the ingredients while cooking stay in the broth.

These cozy meals are also a great way to try out different beans and legumes, which Rasmussen called a "nutritional powerhouse." They're also affordable, accessible, and an excellent source of plant-protein and fiber, said Alicia Henson, a pediatric clinical dietician at the University of California, San Francisco's Benioff Children's Hospital.

Meanwhile, porridges — at breakfast and beyond — are a great way to try out different grains and lend themselves as a base to any cultural flavor, from congee to atole to overnight oats.

"You can make it savory or sweet, you can put leftovers on top, lemon or salsa macha, chili oil or an egg," Rasmussen said. "There's so much versatility."

Herbs and spices aren't just for holidays

When it comes to flavor, let rosemary, thyme, nutmeg, and star anise shine all winter — not just for a holiday meal.

Spices and herbs are a great source of flavor and nutrition. For example, turmeric is known to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits. Some spices have more research on them than others, Rasmussen said. But they're still worth experimenting with in meals, experts agreed.

Liven up snacks and drinks with spices, from smoky chilies to so-called "warming" spices — cloves, ginger, and cumin.

Adding aromatic spices to teas can be great in the winter, whether you're grating your own ginger into the cup or popping in a tea bag, said Susan Aaronson, director of dietetics education at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health. Spices are also great to add to plain popcorn and other snacks — and a way to avoid extra salt and fats that often come in pre-made options.

Cook for others to nourish mind and body

Winter can be particularly isolating for some people, so eat seasonally with friends and family beyond the holidays.

Eating things that are in season can help people connect with the sources of their food and the environment, as well as learn about other cultures and take pride in their own, experts said.

For nearly a decade, Aaronson and some friends meet for a "soup group," where they share and eat "experimental" soups they've each made through the fall and winter.

"It's just a fun way to socialize and try new things," she said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for content.

Stay sober in 2025 and have fun with these expert tips

By Melissa Rayworth
The Associated Press

Last year, when Lauren Haydel began her first sober holiday season, she wondered how difficult it would be to avoid alcohol at family parties and celebrations with friends. She owns a boutique, Fleurty Girl, in New Orleans' French Quarter, a neighborhood synonymous with drinking.

But few people questioned her choice. "Instead of them asking me why," Haydel says, "they ask me, 'Oh, do you feel better?'"

Many friends told her they're considering avoiding alcohol themselves. Sobriety has been having a moment, says Jessica Jeboult, founder of the website and online community A Sober Girl's Guide.

"This is the ultimate time to rediscover or change your relationship with alcohol," she says. With so many alcohol-free products available and growing awareness about the benefits of staying sober, "there is maximum support."

If you are planning to stay sober this holiday season, here are tips from sober coaches, sober bar managers, and happily sober people:

Plan drink options in advance of social events

"Having something in your hand just ups your comfort level, because you feel like you're socializing with this thing in your hand, instead of standing there with your hands at your side," says Abby Ehmann, who owns Hekate Café and Elixir Lounge, a sober bar on New York City's Lower East Side.

It can help to choose your alcohol-free options in advance. If you prefer something that reminds you of alcohol, sample some of the many non-alcoholic wines and beers on the market (they're not all equally tasty) and check which are on the menu at a bar or restaurant you'll be visiting.

If you'll be hosting a party or attending one at someone's home, you also can mix up your own mocktail recipes in advance.

"Treat these drinks like they're really special," says Vermont-based chef Suzanne Podhaizer, who makes an assortment of mocktails when she entertains.

Don't forget the garnish, she says: "Consider putting a sugar rim on your glasses or using luster dust on top. The more you make the non-alcoholic drinks feel celebratory, the better people are going to feel."

Mocktails also make great hostess gifts. Mix up a batch of your favorite recipe, pour it into a large Mason jar, and tie it with a ribbon to bring with you.

Make social plans that don't focus on drinking

Planning to gather somewhere other than a bar is a good option. It's the perfect season "to have some lovely hot chocolates, take them outdoors, and go ice skating," says Kate Baily, a women's health coach in the U.K. and host of the podcast Love Sober.

If you're invited to an event that is all about drinking, give yourself permission to skip it, says Adam Cannon, a real estate agent in Pittsburgh who has been sober for 18 years. In his industry, "at this time of year, there's a different networking event every night of the week," Cannon says. He opts not to go if "ostensibly, it's about networking, but it's at a bar. People are getting hammered."

Know your sober social window

Even if it's your habit to stay out late, "you don't have to do what you've always done at this particular Christmas party," Haydel says. Drop in for the first hour, then allow yourself to leave when you wish.

You won't miss much. "There's a witching hour when you're out at a bar or drinking with friends," Jeboult says. "When people get past two drinks, three drinks, the stories are the same."

If need be, slip out without explanation. Whether you call it a "French exit" or an "Irish goodbye," it's totally an option.

Take breaks and connect with sober support

If you're feeling stressed during a holiday gathering, "take a time out," Jeboult says. Escape to the bathroom, step outside for a minute, or go for a walk.

Snack breaks help, too. Jay Bridwell, a recovery counsellor at Red Rock Behavioral Health in Oklahoma City, often uses the acronym HALT with patients in addiction recovery. If you are "Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired," he says, you may be more likely to reach for alcohol. So build in time for rest and meals.

And have a plan if things get tough. Whether it's an Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor, a sober relative, or a group text with healthy friends, stay connected with people who will support you, Bridwell says. You can also join an online sober group and follow sobriety-related social media accounts.

Plan your transportation

Map out multiple transportation options, rather than relying on one person for a ride home. You'll have less stress, and feel less motivated to temper stress with alcohol, if you have the freedom to leave when you wish.

View being sober as a holiday gift to yourself

During her first sober holiday season last year, Haydel revelled in meaningful conversations and the joy of waking up feeling good each morning with clear memories of the night before.

"Sobriety is the gift that you keep on giving to your future self over and over and over again," says Eliott Edge, who manages Hekate, the sober bar.

Focus on enjoying this very real gift, Baily says. Take your time getting dressed, visualizing yourself having a great time, and imagine how you'll feel as your head hits the pillow when you get home.

As a finishing touch, plan a reward for the next day. Maybe a breakfast date with a friend or a morning walk in the park that will feel especially good because you won't be hung over.

"You've got the best bits of the evening," Baily says, "and there are no costs."

Events calendar

"... A Familiar Taste"

Through Jan 15, noon-4pm (Wed & Fri), noon-6pm (Thu), Postmark Center for the Arts (20 Auburn Ave, Auburn, Wash.). View "... A Familiar Taste," an exhibit that highlights narratives from artists of color through the lens of food and cultural foodways. The display presents a visual and literary feast evoking a diverse range of connections, emotions, and memories. Featured artists include MalPina Chan, Monyee Chau, Chanel Athena Estrada | "COY," isaura jiménez guerra, Lauren Iida, Jae Eun Kim, Alan Lau, Oliver Vy Le Nguyen, Raychelle Ordoñez, and Yixuan Pan. For info, call (253) 931-5100 or visit <www.auburnwa.gov>.

"We Can Be Heroes: Voting and Beyond"

Through Jan 20, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View "We Can Be Heroes: Voting and Beyond," an exhibit about the long history of discrimination, disenfranchisement, and barriers to voting that have affected Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities, as well as others. These barriers have sparked community movements that have demanded change — and won. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

"In the Dark There is Light"

Through Jan 25, 11am-5:30pm (Tue-Sat), ArtX Contemporary (512 First Ave S, Seattle). View "In the Dark There is Light," a winter group exhibit featuring works by HiiH Lights, Tiao Nithakhong Somsanith, William Song, Juan Alonso-Rodríguez, and others. In the display, the ways that artists evoke light and dark are explored through mediums including paint, handmade paper, metal embroidery, textile, and more, including William Song's minimalist works, lighted sculpture by HiiH Lights, and leaves by Tiao Nithakhong Somsanith, which are intricately beaded in hammered gold, silver, and copper to create a glittering reflection on the impermanence of life. For info, call (206) 839-0377 or visit <www.artxcontemporary.com>.

"Kintsugi: The Restorative Art of Naoko Fukumaru"

Through Jan 27, 10am-4:30pm (Wed-Mon), Portland Japanese Garden (611 SW Kingston Ave, Portland). View "Kintsugi: The Restorative Art of Naoko Fukumaru," a display exploring universally resonant themes of healing through the works of kintsugi artist and master conservator Naoko Fukumaru. Kintsugi is an ancient method of mending damaged ceramics using urushi (natural lacquer) dusted with powdered gold. This type of mending highlights the beauty of imperfections, rather than trying to hide them. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 223-1321 or visit <www.japanesegarden.com>.

Yoshihiro Kitai

Through Feb 1 (Tue-Sat), 11am-5:30pm, Froelick Gallery (714 NW Davis St, Portland). View "I am looking at the same sky no matter where I am," a display of works by Yoshihiro Kitai exploring the artist's internal struggle between their Japanese roots and current life in the United States. Kitai's abstract creations investigate human connections and the nuances of group dynamics in American society utilizing a mix of Japanese and western materials influenced by traditional Japanese ceramics, including a surprising embrace of imperfection. For info, call (503) 222-1142 or visit <www.froelickgallery.com>.

"Lucy Kim: Mutant Optics"

Through Feb 2, 10am-7pm (Thu), 10am-5pm (Fri-Sun), Henry Art Gallery (15th Ave NE & NE 41st St, Seattle). View "Lucy Kim: Mutant Optics," an installation of new melanin works made from images of vanilla plants. The display looks at the artist's broader investigations into the entangled relationship between bioengineering, visual appearance, and the social and cultural construction of race and perception. One of Kim's compositions includes more than sixty overlapping and layered prints spanning the nearly full 20-foot-high gallery walls. In addition, through June of 2025, an exterior mural by Christine Sun Kim — "Ghost(ed) Notes" — is featured. For info, call (206) 543-2280 or visit <www.henryart.org>.

"Hello Auntie, Hello Uncle: Conversations with Our Elders"

Through Feb 23, 10am-5pm (Wed-Sun), Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (719 S King St, Seattle). View "Hello Auntie, Hello Uncle: Conversations with Our Elders," an exhibit that explores the many roles elders play in our communities, celebrates their lives and achievements, and honors the wisdom gained with time. The display elaborates on who an elder can be and what a society that values and supports an elder might look like. Additionally, it celebrates the caregivers and community organizations that make that world possible with first-hand community stories about living through many ages of time. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (206) 623-5124 or visit <www.wingluke.org>.

Free citizenship classes

Jan 9-Apr 5; Jan 9-Mar 27 (Thu), 5:30-7:30pm, Brookwood Library (2850 NE Brookwood Pkwy, Hillsboro, Ore.); Jan 11-Mar 29 (Sat), 11am-1pm, Beaverton City Library (12375 SW Fifth St, Beaverton, Ore.); Jan 11-Apr 5 (Sat), 2:30-4:30pm, Holgate Library (7905 SE Holgate Blvd, Portland); Jan 12-Mar 30 (Sun), 1-3pm, Rockwood Library (17917 SE Stark St, Portland); Jan 12-Mar 30 (Sun), 3-5pm, Slavic Community Center of the Northwest (11050 SE Powell Blvd, Unit #371, Portland); Jan 14-Mar 25 (Tue), 6:30-9pm, SOAR Immigration Legal Services (7931 NE Halsey St, Unit 300, Portland). Learn about the process of becoming a U.S. citizen and prepare for the citizenship interview at free classes. Participants study English, reading, writing, speaking, and U.S. history and government. The classes are facilitated by SOAR Immigration Legal Services. All are welcome. Sign up for in-person classes takes place on the first day of class (no pre-registration is necessary). Students are asked to bring their Green Card with them on the first day. For info, call (503) 384-2482, ext. 116, e-mail Jennica at <jstephenson@emoregon.org>, or visit <www.soarlegal.org/our-services/citizenship-classes>.

Studio Ghibli Film Festival

Jan 10-Feb 9, Oregon Museum of Science & Industry (1945 SE Water Ave, Portland). Attend the Studio Ghibli Film Festival, the Oregon Museum of Science & Industry's annual celebration featuring films created by the legendary Japanese animation company. The festival kicks off with *Howl's Moving Castle* on opening night and continues with multiple screenings of *Castle in the Sky*, *From Up On Poppy Hill*, *Grave of the Fireflies*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, *Only Yesterday*, *Pom Poko*, *Ponyo*, *Porco Rosso*, *Spirited Away*, *Tales from Earthsea*, *The Boy and the Heron*, *The Cat Returns*, *The Secret World of Arrietty*, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, *The Wind Rises*, *When Marnie Was There*, and *Whisper of the Hear*. For info, times, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 797-4000 or visit <www.omsi.edu/exhibits/studio-ghibli-film-festival>.

Kimberly Akimbo

Jan 14-19, Keller Auditorium (222 SW Clay St, Portland). Watch *Kimberly Akimbo*, a new musical about growing up and growing old — in no particular order. Kimberly is about to turn 16 and recently moved with her family to a new town in suburban New Jersey when she is forced to navigate family dysfunction, a rare genetic condition, her first crush … and possible felony charges. The production, which features Miguel Gil, Carolee Carmello, Regene Seven Odon, and others, is presented by Broadway in Portland, recommended for attendees age 10 and above, and runs 2 hours, 25 minutes with one intermission. (Children under age 5 are not permitted in the theater.) For info, showtimes, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 248-4335, or visit <www.portland5.com> or <www.broadwayinportland.com>. To learn more, visit <www.kimberlyakimbothemusical.com>.

Martha Graham Dance Company

Jan 22, 7:30pm, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall (1037 SW Broadway, Portland). Attend a performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company, which is celebrating 100 years since its founding. The show, presented by White Bird, features "Errand into the Maze" and "CAVE." For info, or to purchase tickets, call (503) 245-1600 or visit <www.whitebird.org>.

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

"NEW YEAR, NEW AKIHO." *Andy Akiho's "New Year, New Akiho" takes place at 7:00pm on January 28 at the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts in Beaverton, Oregon. (Photo courtesy of the artist)*

Portland Fine Print Fair

Jan 24-26, 10am-6pm (Sat), 11am-5pm (Sun), Portland Art Museum, Mark Building, Fred & Suzanne Fields Ballroom (1119 SW Park Ave, Portland). Attend the Portland Fine Print Fair, the largest and most comprehensive print fair on the west coast. Participants are able to explore original prints from Old Masters to contemporary emerging artists. The fair has something for everyone, from first-time collectors to seasoned connoisseurs. Free talks and tours take place Saturday at 10:30am and Sunday at 1:30pm. For info, call (503) 226-2811 or visit <www.portlandartmuseum.org>.

"Bill Naito and the Historic Structures He Preserved"

Jan 25, 10-11:30am, Architectural Heritage Center (701 SE Grand Ave, Portland). Join author Erica Naito-Campbell for "Bill Naito and the Historic Structures He Preserved," a talk about William "Bill" Sumio Naito's (1925-1996) historic and architectural preservation work in Portland,

Continued on page 19

Zakir Hussain, one of India's most accomplished classical musicians, dies at 73

By Sheikh Saaliq
The Associated Press

TABLA MASTER. *Indian drum maestro Zakir Hussain performs at the "Living Dream Concert" in New Delhi, India, on February 16, 2009. Hussain, one of India's most accomplished classical musicians who defied genres and introduced tabla to global audiences, has died. He was 73 years old. (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi, File)*

NEW DELHI — Zakir Hussain, one of India's most accomplished classical musicians who defied genres and introduced tabla to global audiences, died on Sunday, December 15. He was 73 years old.

The Indian classical music icon died from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic lung disease, at a hospital in San Francisco, his family said in a statement.

"His prolific work as a teacher, mentor, and educator has left an indelible mark on countless musicians. He hoped to inspire the next generation to go further. He leaves behind an unparalleled legacy as a cultural ambassador and one of the greatest musicians of all time," the statement read.

Hussain was the most recognizable exponent of tabla, a pair of hand drums that is the main percussion instrument in Indian classical music.

Considered the greatest tabla player of his generation, Hussain had a career that spanned six decades in which he collaborated with the likes of singer-songwriter George Harrison, jazz saxophonist Charles Lloyd, drummer Mickey Hart, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

The son of legendary tabla artist Alla Rakha, Hussain was born in 1951 in Mumbai and was taught how to play the instrument by his father at the age of seven. A child prodigy, he was touring by age 12 and performing alongside India's classical music legends during his teens.

In an interview that was shared widely on social media in India, Hussain says his father welcomed him into the world after he was born by speaking tabla rhythms into his ears.

"I was brought home, handed over to my dad in his arms. The tradition was that the father is supposed to recite a prayer in the baby's ear ... So he takes me in his arms, puts his lips to my ear and recites the tabla rhythms into my ears," Hussain said in the interview, verbally imitating the rhythmic pattern of the instrument.

Both Alla Rakha and Hussain were given the honorific "Ustad," an Urdu word that means master.

In 1973, Hussain formed the Indian jazz fusion band "Shakti" with jazz guitarist John McLaughlin. The band played acoustic fusion music that combined Indian music with elements of jazz, introducing a new sound to western audiences.

In 2024, Hussain became the first musician from India to win three Grammy awards in the same year.

Hussain's *Shakti* won Best Global Music Album, and his collaboration with Edgar Meyer, Béla Fleck, and flutist Rakesh Chaurasia won Best Global Music Performance and Best Contemporary Instrumental Album. He had earlier won a Grammy in 2009.

In 2023, Hussain received the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian award.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Hussain a "true genius who revolutionized the world of Indian classical music" and "an icon of cultural unity."

"He also brought the tabla to the global stage, captivating millions with his unparalleled rhythm," Modi wrote in a post on the social media platform X.

Hussain is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Editor's note: Global fusion alchemists Shakti performed at Portland's Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall on September 5, 2023 on their first U.S. tour in 16 years. The 50th anniversary tour featured Hussain and McLaughlin.

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BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

SUB-BIDS REQUESTED

EVERGREEN CROSSING

8225 NE Wasco Street
Portland, OR 97220

Bids Due: January 10, 2025, at 12:00pm

LMC Construction is soliciting proposals for the partial renovation of Central City Concern (CCC) Evergreen Crossing, an occupied 49,900 square foot, type V-A constructed, 3-story former hotel located in the Montavilla neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. The renovation work to the 12,100 square feet of CCC Evergreen is to be comprised of, but not limited to an added second elevator, infill of existing pool and selective renovation to the administrative and clinical spaces along with upgrades to unit restrooms for wheelchair accessibility.

Please note: The building and site will remain in use during construction. Please reference the project schedule when bidding.

Preselected Trades: Shoring, Elevators, mechanical, Electrical, Low Voltage, Plumbing and Fire Suppression. Additional submissions for these trades will not be entertained.

Project Requirements:
Boli Prevailing Wage Rates. Be sure to reference the bid documents for the applicable wage rates.

Bid Document Link:
<https://bids.lmcconstruction.com/CCCEvergreenCrossing>

Bid Submissions and Project Contact:
<bids.evergreencrossing@lmcconstruction.com>

LMC CONSTRUCTION

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

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

CCB# 161282

BIDS, SUB-BIDS & PUBLIC NOTICES

Obayashi Corporation is requesting pricing from COBID certified electric firms for Bull Run Filtration Pipeline Project S02 Package in Boring, OR.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

BULL RUN FILTRATION PIPELINE PROJECT S-02:

Raw Water Pipeline consists of two, 72-inch diameter, parallel steel pipes (Lusted Raw Water North and Lusted Raw Water South). The Raw water Pipeline is at depth of approximately 25 m to 230 m below grade and is approximately 790 m long. The Shaft is at a depth of 235 m below grade.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS
The Contract Documents for the Bull Run Project may be viewed and downloaded from the following link:
<https://app.box.com/s/0p4m13yhb6quokuu5op3jz2z9nq0qghm>

SCOPE OF WORK
Obayashi is requesting quotes for temporary electric work to support the tunneling operation in the project.

- Install & wire temporary electric devices on site.
- Perform troubleshooting of the temporary electric system on site.
- Duration: January-2025 to March-2026
- 2-man crew (1 foreman and 1 journeyman or 1 apprentice)
- Work hours: 7am to 5pm, 5 days (Monday to Friday)
- Work based on T&M basis.

PROJECT REQUIREMENT
- Have industrial Electric Work Experience
- Can work underground.
- Prevailing wage
- Follow Regional Workforce Equity Agreement
- Qualified as High Road Contractor
- IBEW Local 48

CONTRACTING REQUIREMENTS
All contractors conducting work on the site are subject to the provisions of the Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA) and the Construction Diversity and Inclusion Program. (CDIP)

Please confirm all requirements before you send your quote.

We encourage quotes from qualified and certified SB, VOB, SDVOB, HUB, SDB, WOSB, and LB businesses and will consider special bonding, insurance, or credit needs. Please note that copies of DBE certifications, and contractor's license number will be required to be submitted with quote. We are an equal opportunity employer. Plans, Specifications, and Requirements for the project are available for review (see below).

For questions, please contact our Estimating Team at:

Obayashi Corporation
950 Tower Lane, Suite 800, Foster City, CA 94404
Phone: (206) 234-2016
E-mail: <satoshi.akai@obayashi-usa.com>

The Asian Reporter's advertising sections may be viewed online at:
<www.asianreporter.com/nwjobmarket.htm>
<www.asianreporter.com/notices.htm>

Have a safe & prosperous Year of the Snake!

January 29, 2025 to February 16, 2026

Our Lunar New Year special section begins on page 8.
The issue is also available online at <www.asianreporter.com>.

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

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

February 3 issue: Friday, January 31, 2:00pm
March 3 issue: Friday, February 28, 2:00pm
April 7 issue: Friday, April 4, 2:00pm

For more information, contact our Advertising Department at (503) 283-4440 or e-mail <ads@asianreporter.com>.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

METRO HOUSING AND PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENTS

REGIONAL HOUSING COORDINATION STRATEGY (ANALYSIS AND FACILITATION)

RFP 4423

The Housing and Planning, Development, and Research departments of Metro, a metropolitan service district organized under the laws of the State of Oregon and the Metro Charter, located at 600 NE Grand Avenue, Portland, OR 97232-2736, is hereby requesting sealed proposals for Regional Housing Coordination Strategy (Analysis and Facilitation).

DEADLINE, NAME AND TITLE OF PERSON DESIGNATED FOR RECEIPT OF BIDS
Sealed bids are due no later than 2:00pm, January 16, 2025, at BidLocker:

<https://bidlocker.us/details/4661_Rfp_4423_Regional_Housing_Coordination_Strategy_Analysis_And_Facilitation>

Pre-Proposal Conference
A voluntary pre-proposal conference will be held via zoom at the link below on January 7, 2025 at 10:00am. Interested proposers and subcontractors are encouraged to attend the conference in order to gain information about the RFP requirements.
<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0lc-mgqT4rHtwR8UyDvs1l5-u3KOotyAgI>

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK
The Oregon Housing Needs Analysis (OHNA) program articulates new responsibilities for state agencies and local governments to reorient the implementation of Statewide Land Use Planning Goals 10 (Housing) and 14 (Urbanization) to produce more housing, ensure equitable access to housing, and ensure state and local governments take action to address need. As the regional government, Metro will not produce a Housing Production Strategy but instead is tasked to complete a Regional Housing Coordination Strategy (RHCS) by the end of 2025 and within one year of completing an Urban Growth Report thereafter (every six years). A project team made of staff from both the Housing Department and Planning, Development and Research will collaborate to produce the RHCS. As staff pursues engagement with local jurisdictions, community partners, and advocate groups, the primary goal is to coordinate local activities and build a roadmap for the actions Metro will lead or support to promote housing production and access. The key components of the work plan include required data analysis, engagement, and identification and evaluation of regional strategies to support housing production and access.

WHERE TO FIND DOCUMENTS
Bidding documents/RFP documents can be viewed and downloaded from BidLocker:

<https://bidlocker.us/details/4661_Rfp_4423_Regional_Housing_Coordination_Strategy_Analysis_And_Facilitation>

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS
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>.

The Asian Reporter's 24-hour faxline is (503) 283-4445.

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THE ASIAN REPORTER CAN BE PICKED UP ON THE FIRST MONDAY EACH MONTH AT MANY LOCATIONS, INCLUDING:

Uwajimaya 10500 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy., Beaverton	**Nam Phuong** 6834 NE Sandy Blvd. Portland	**H Mart** 13600 SW Pacific Hwy., Tigard	**Lily Market** 11001 NE Halsey St. Portland	**Lao Vieng Market** 1032 N Killingsworth St., Portland	**Hong Phat Supermarket** 11655 SW Pacific Hwy., Tigard

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

SURFING THE WEB?

Check out our last two issues, jobs, news, lists of community groups, past stories, and more on our site: <www.asianreporter.com>

FOR SALE

Farm-raised livestock

PORK FOR SALE

Pigs raised on our family farm in Newberg, Oregon, are for sale. Meat is available in half or whole pig and processed by our butcher in Portland, Oregon. For pricing & details, please call (503) 980-5900.

GRASS-FED BEEF FOR SALE

Cattle raised in Yamhill County at our family farm in Newberg, Oregon. Beef is available in ¼, ½, or whole cow & processed by our butcher in Portland. For pricing & details, please call (503) 980-5900.

FOR SALE

Home Entertainment

HOME ENTERTAINMENT INSTALLATION

Need stereo & HDTV set-up for the perfect home theater surround sound? We can do it! Great prices, expert service! Please contact Digital Connections at (971) 853-2576.

FREE

Packing material

PACKING MATERIAL

FREE used-once packing material. 6" plastic bubble pockets available. Please leave a voice message at (503) 283-4440, ext. #, or e-mail <news@asianreporter.com>.

REAL ESTATE

For Sale/For Lease

BETHANY MEADOWS,

an affordable apartment community in Washington County, is currently accepting applications for the waitlist. This beautiful community is located off Highway 26 near Bethany & Cornell and offers spacious 1 & 2 bedroom units affordable to individuals and families earning 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Amenities include washer/dryer in units, pool/spa, fitness center, onsite management, ample parking, and optional garage spaces.

Water/sewer/garbage included. Property is located near shopping, restaurants, and parks. Section 8 vouchers are welcome.

Income restrictions apply. Equal Housing Opportunity.

For more information, please call (503) 533-1000, e-mail <bethanymeadows@bridgehousing.com> or you can visit our website at <www.bethanymeadowsapartments.com>.

REAL ESTATE

For Sale/For Lease

Have a safe & prosperous Year of the Snake!

January 29, 2025 to February 16, 2026

Our Lunar New Year special section begins on page 8.
The issue is also available online at <www.asianreporter.com>.

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❑ Special "Business Card" Display Ad:

☐ $70 per issue (1 month) ☐ $190 for 3 consecutive issues (3 months) ☐ $330 for 6 consecutive issues (6 months)

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

❑ Northwest Job Market/Bids & Public Notices section

$25.00 per column inch; Text/Fax deadline: Friday prior to the next issue by 2:00pm

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❑ Community Classified Page

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❑ Add $1.00 per issue per line for bold headings (Line Ad & Name Listing).
❑ Add 25¢ per word per issue after 35 words (Line Ad).
❑ All advertisements must be submitted in writing; no phone ads accepted.

The Asian Reporter

Main classification: Run date(s): Total ad cost:

Ad type (circle one): Display ad Business Card Box ad Line ad Name listing ad

Name:

Address: City/State/ZIP:

Phone: Fax: E-mail:

Ad copy (attach a separate sheet if necessary):

Mail, Fax, or Deliver with payment to:

Asian Reporter Classifieds, 922 N Killingsworth Street, Suite 2D, Portland, OR 97217-2220
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For Visa or Mastercard payment only:

Name (as it appears on the card):

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Zip Code & Address of Cardholder:

Card Number: Security Code:

Events calendar

Continued from page 17

HIGH-ENERGY DANCE. *White Bird is presenting a performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company on January 22 at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall in downtown Portland. (Photo courtesy of the Martha Graham Dance Company)*

accompanied by video and pictures. A book signing follows the lecture. For info, or to purchase tickets (required), call (503) 231-7264 or visit <www.visitahc.org/exhibits>.

VSO Young Artist Showcase

Jan 25-26, 7pm (Sat), 3pm (Sun), Skyview High School Concert Hall (1300 NW 139th St, Vancouver, Wash.). Enjoy a performance by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO) featuring the gold medal winners of the annual Young Artist Competition, including pianist Alexander Liu, oboist Hannah Cho, and violinist Mio Imai. Thirty-minute pre-concert shows are available for concertgoers to attend one hour before each program. For info, or to purchase tickets, call (360) 735-7278 or visit <www.vancouversymphony.org>.

"New Year, New Akiho"

Jan 28, 7pm, Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Join Andy Akiho for "New Year, New Akiho," an evening featuring the west coast premiere of the musician's new piece written for 45th Parallel, in addition to the world premiere of a new work by Aeryn Santillan. In addition, the program also highlights Daniel Wohl's award-winning composition, Holographic, accompanied by visual projections by Daniel Schwarz. For info or to purchase tickets, call (971) 501-7722 or <www.thereser.org>.

"Kiki's Delivery Service of Swan Songs and Awkward Hand Holding"

Feb 1, 7:30pm, The Old Church (1422 SW 11th Ave, Portland). Attend "Kiki's Delivery Service of Swan Songs and Awkward Hand Holding," the final installment of singer and actor Kimo Camat's concert trilogy about finding himself and finding his voice. Kimo's band features a mixture of retro pop, funk, and a dash of musical theatre, and includes Madeleine Tran, Eddie May, and Christina Avellan Mantilla on backing vocals, Mak Kastelic on the piano, Joseph Mammarella on guitar, Juliet Terrill on bass, Paul Van Sickle on drums, and Peter QB on saxophone. To purchase tickets, visit <www.kimocamat.com>.

"Indigenous Australian Art"

Feb 6-Mar 22, 11am-5:30pm (Tue-Sat), ArtX Contemporary (512 First Ave S, Seattle). View "Indigenous Australian Art," an exhibit featuring a diverse collection of paintings by indigenous Australian painters, from established masters exhibited in Seattle Art Museum's Ancestral Modern, to the next generation of emerging indigenous artists. Utilizing contemporary mediums, the artists adapt visual languages that have evolved over centuries. The paintings appear abstract, but they are brimming with mythology, landscape, and ancestral knowledge. The gallery's Pioneer Square Art Walk opening reception takes place on February 6 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm. For info, call (206) 839-0377 or visit <www.artxcontemporary.com>.

Ho'ike fundraiser

Feb 8, 3:30pm (lobby & raffle open), 4:30pm (theater doors open), 5pm (performance), Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (12625 SW Crescent St, Beaverton, Ore.). Attend a ho'ike fundraiser and show presented by the Ka'ana 'Ike A Ka 'Ohana Foundation. The event features traditional Polynesian dancing by Hula Halau 'Ohana Holo'oko'a, music, performances, and more. For info, call (503) 516-0436 or visit <www.kiako.org>. To purchase tickets, call (971) 501-7722 or <www.thereser.org>.

PSU VSA Culture Show

Feb 15, 6-9pm, Portland State University (PSU), Smith Memorial Student Union (1825 SW Broadway, Portland). Attend the Portland State University Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) Culture Show. The event features food, music, and performances. For info, call (503) 725-5855, or visit <https://pdx.campuslabs.com/engage/event/10758926> or <www.facebook.com/vsapsu>.

Huge and rare Mekong catfish spotted in Cambodia, raising conservation hopes

By Aniruddha Ghosal
The Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — Six critically endangered Mekong giant catfish — one of the largest and rarest freshwater fish in the world — were caught and released recently in Cambodia, reviving hopes for the survival of the species.

The underwater giants can grow up to 10 feet long and weigh up to 661 pounds, or as heavy as a grand piano. They now are only found in Southeast Asia's Mekong River, but in the past inhabited the length of the 3,044 mile-long river, all the way from its outlet in Vietnam to its northern reaches in China's Yunnan province.

The species' population has plummeted by 80% in recent decades due to rising pressures from overfishing, dams that block the migratory path the fish follow to spawn, and other disruptions.

Few of the millions of people who depend on the Mekong for their livelihoods have ever seen a giant catfish. To find six of the giants, which were caught and released within 5 days, is unprecedented.

The first two were on the Tonle Sap river, a tributary of the Mekong not far from the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. They were given identification tags and released. Then fishermen caught four more giant catfish including two longer than 6.5 feet that weighed 264 pounds and 288 pounds, respectively. The captured

CATFISH CONSERVATION. *In this photo released by Zeb Hogan, a research biologist who leads the USAID Wonders of the Mekong project, people hold a Mekong giant catfish before releasing it into the Mekong River in Kampong Cham, Cambodia. (Zeb Hogan, USAID Wonders of the Mekong project via AP)*

fish were apparently migrating from their floodplain habitats near Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake northward along the Mekong River, likely to spawning grounds in northern Cambodia, Laos, or Thailand.

"It's a hopeful sign that the species is not in imminent, like in the next few years, risk of extinction, which gives conservation activities time to be implemented and to continue to bend the curve away from decline and toward recovery," said Dr. Zeb Hogan, a University of Nevada Reno research biologist who leads the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Wonders of the Mekong project.

Much is still unknown about the giant fish, but over the past two decades a joint conservation program by the Wonders of the Mekong and the Cambodian Fisheries Administration has caught, tagged, and released around 100 of them, gaining insights into how the catfish migrate, where they live, and the health of the species.

"This information is used to establish migration corridors and protect habitats to try to help these fish survive in the future," said Hogan.

The Mekong giant catfish is woven into the region's cultural fabric, depicted in 3,000-year-old cave paintings, revered in folklore, and considered a symbol of the river, whose fisheries feed millions and are valued at $10 billion annually.

Local communities play a crucial role in conservation. Fishermen now know about the importance of reporting accidental catches of rare and endangered species to officials, enabling researchers to reach places where fish have been captured and measure and tag them before releasing them.

"Their cooperation is essential for our research and conservation efforts," Heng Kong, the director of Cambodia's Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute, said in a statement.

Apart from the Mekong giant catfish, the river is also home to other large fish including the salmon carp, which was thought to be extinct until it was spotted earlier last year, and the giant sting ray.

That four of these fish were caught and tagged in a single day is likely the "big fish story of the century for the Mekong," said Brian Eyler, director of the Washington-based Stimson Center's Southeast Asia Program. He said that seeing them confirms that the annual fish migration was still robust despite all the pressures facing the environment along the Mekong.

"Hopefully what happened [last month] will show the Mekong countries and the world that the Mekong's mighty fish population is uniquely special and needs to be conserved," he said.

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

NATURAL CANVAS. *A Japanese leaf-cutting artist, who goes by the name Lito, outlines a leaf with a pen for his work in Tokyo. The world of Lito's delicate art, which he began in 2020 and posts on social media almost daily, has won fans from around the world. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)*

A Japanese artist finds solace and global fans with intricate leaf-cutting

By Mayuko Ono, Shuji Kajiyama, and Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — A frog holding a taro-leaf umbrella. A parade of frolicking animals. An Ukiyo-e style Mount Fuji. Giant waves. A Japanese artist who goes by the name Lito carves these delicate designs on fallen leaves, giving life back to them.

The world of Lito's delicate art, which he began in 2020 and posts on social media almost daily, has won fans from around the world. The leaf art has also given him solace after earlier struggles with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and a purpose in life — the joy of making people happy with his art.

He enjoys working at night. From a pile of leaves treated with a wrinkle-free chemical, he picks one and places it on a cutting board.

First, he outlines the design on the leaf with a pen in his right hand. Then he takes a design knife in his left hand and starts cutting the leaf carefully. Slowly, the leaf begins to take the shape of a frog carrying an umbrella — a simple design he demonstrated in a recent interview with The AP.

More complex, highly intensive work on a single leaf can take more than eight hours to complete.

His leaf-cutting works include titles such as "Scrolls of Frolicking Animals," "Leaf Aquarium," and "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji: The Great Wave off Kanagawa." Each piece includes his own twists, and often uses animals.

"I would rather finish it in one go when I am focused," Lito, 38, said. He didn't want to disclose his real name for personal reasons.

Since childhood, Lito says he has had high levels of concentration and patience. But he had trouble fitting into what was considered the norm at school or at work, despite all his efforts. He struggled to interpret others' feelings and to avoid confrontations.

After years of difficulty, he went to a hospital at age 30 and was told he has ADHD, a diagnosis that he felt explained why he has always done things differently.

He saw no point in forcing himself to do

Continued on page 3