



**FEMALE FIRST.** Afghan coders practice at the Code to Inspire computer training center in Herat province, western Afghanistan. The group of young Afghan women in the deeply conservative province is breaking traditional barriers as the country's first female coders in an overwhelmingly male-dominated field. The game they created underscores Afghanistan's struggle to eradicate vast opium poppy fields ruled by the Taliban. (AP Photo/Ahmad Seir)

## First Afghan female coders bring it on: "Fight Against Opium"

By Ahmad Seir and Rahim Faiez  
The Associated Press

**H**ERAT, Afghanistan — A group of young Afghan women in the deeply conservative Herat province is breaking traditional barriers as the country's first female coders in an overwhelmingly male-dominated field.

The game they created underscores Afghanistan's struggle to eradicate vast opium poppy fields ruled by the Taliban.

For 20-year-old Khatera Mohammadi, a student at the Code to Inspire computer training center, it's more than just a game: "Fight Against Opium" was based on her brother's real-life experience.

Mohammadi recounted to The Associated Press recently that "each time he came back home, he would tell us about the poppy fields, the terrible mine blasts, battling opium traffickers and drugs."

She and her colleagues at the center thought that if they create a game, it would raise awareness, especially among the young.

## Philippines objects to China's naming of undersea features

By Jim Gomez  
The Associated Press

**M**ANILA, The Philippines — The Philippine government is rejecting Chinese names given to some undersea features in a vast offshore region where the Philippines has undisputed sovereign rights, the presidential spokesman said in a new tiff despite the Asian neighbors' mended ties.

The Philippines has already raised its concern to China over its naming of the undersea features in Benham Rise and may officially notify the international hydrographic body that lists such records, spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said.

China proposed the names for the features in 2015 and 2017, he said.

In Beijing, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said China has been participating in activities related to proposing names for undersea features "in accordance with international practice" and the rules of the international hydrographic body.

"China fully respects the Philippines' continental shelf rights over Benham Rise," said Geng Shuang, the Chinese spokesman. "Meanwhile, we hope the relevant parties can be objective and responsible in viewing relevant technical works."

Benham Rise lies on the other side of the Philippine archipelago from the South China Sea, where Manila, Beijing, and four other governments have been locked in territorial disputes.

Critics have questioned why Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's administration allowed a group from China to undertake scientific research in the waters given Manila's long-simmering territorial conflict with Beijing in the South China Sea.

China has defied and refuses to comply with an international arbitration ruling that invalidated its claim to virtually all of the South China Sea on historical grounds.

"We object and do not recognize the Chinese names given to some undersea features in the Philippine Rise," Roque said in a statement, using the name given by the Duterte administration to Benham Rise.

Duterte has ordered an end to all foreign scientific

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# Olympics are a chance to go home again for Korean American

By Claire Galofaro  
The Associated Press

**G**ANGNEUNG, South Korea — When Song Hong used to tell his grandchildren about his childhood, he would joke that they were "country folks" from a rugged and rural corner of the world that none of their fellow Americans had ever heard of, or likely ever would.

Then one day, from his home in California, he saw the news: That rugged and rural corner of the world he left four decades ago for a new life in the United States had been named the unlikely host of the 2018 Winter Olympics.

"I was so proud," he said. "That they would hold the Olympics in my hometown, and I would have the chance to have my own family see it. I want to show it to them."

They planned the trip for years. And this month, Song and his wife, Chong, arrived with their son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren to explore a very different city than the one they left behind in 1975.

The most elite athletes in the world now live, for a few weeks, in the high-rise apartment buildings of the Olympic Village with an address he'd never dreamed he'd see attached to such prestige: Gangneung. On the other side of the city stands Olympic Park, with its brand-new arena for marquee events like skating and ice hockey.

He giggles with delight that his grandchildren, nine-year-old Chloe and 11-year-old Brandon, are impressed with his city.

"They've never been here before and they say, 'Oh! Grandfather, your city is very nice. Everything's nice, everything's new, because the Winter Olympics [are] here,'" he said.

Song and Chong Hong live now in Mountain View, California. They were young children when the Korean War began in 1950. Both grew up in poor families — just about everyone here was poor back then, he said.

They ate bowls of rice and potatoes that never seemed enough. American soldiers arrived and gave chocolate bars to the children. They seemed so precious to Song, but the Americans handed them out like they were nothing, and he became enchanted by what life might be like in the United States.

Years later, he joined the army and fought in the Vietnam War alongside the American troops, who invited them into their dining hall.



**RETURN TO GANGNEUNG.** Song Hong walks in downtown Gangneung, South Korea. Song and his wife, Chong, arrived with their son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren to explore a very different city than the one they left behind in 1975. The most elite athletes in the world now live, for a few weeks, in the high-rise apartment buildings of the Olympic Village with an address he'd never dreamed he'd see attached to such prestige: Gangneung. (AP Photo/Felipe Dana)

"I looked at the beef, the donuts, cookies, cakes, ice cream — it's all there, anytime," he says. There were no jobs back home. His son, Chae, was just three, and he and his wife fretted about his future, about hunger.

"I told them, I said, 'I have to try to go to America,'" he remembers. "I just imagined if I go to America, I would have a job, everyday eating beef, cake, Coca-Cola."

And he did.

The family moved to California. He got a job as a welder, then he and his wife bought an ice-cream truck and eventually expanded their fleet to four. They also ran a coin laundry, then a dry cleaner. They worked 80-hour weeks and they didn't mind struggling because they imagined it meant their son wouldn't have to.

In that time, South Korea remade itself, too. His town, in his memory full of squat buildings with limited plumbing and electricity, now has fine restaurants and tall buildings and the most modern technology in the world.

Yet he cannot imagine moving back.

"He's very scared that here will be a war between North and South Korea," said his son, Chae, helping his father, who is still more comfortable speaking Korean, express his thoughts in English.

"In the U.S., we don't have that. Canada isn't the equivalent of North Korea," Chae says. "Here, when he comes back, he's still subjected to that type of talk, that type of politics. He doesn't have to worry about that in the U.S."

While they were planning their

trip, tension was escalating between U.S. President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, the third-generation North Korean leader. Chae asked his father if they might want to reconsider going.

"He was really dismissive," Chae recalls. "He said, Kim Jong Un is all talk. It's just part of living here. Koreans are used to it, because it's always there."

As Song watched the opening ceremony, he saw hope in the presence of North Koreans, whose life he imagines must be a lot like his used to be, back when South Korea was poor.

"They must have been amazed seeing the lighting, the firecrackers, the technology. They must have been in awe," he said. He hopes the athletes, the cheerleaders, and everyone else who saw it goes home and tells friends and neighbors that South Korea is the land of plenty.

Just like he used to imagine America to be.

"We are the same land, the same people," he says. "The only difference is our thinking."

For now, he's content to spend a week proudly touring his grandchildren around his hometown, regaling them with his childhood stories.

Here is the great ginkgo tree still standing, he shows them. There is where his childhood home once stood. This is where he used to meet high-school friends, where they'd rub garlic on their faces to make their mustaches grow, just like they once saw in an American movie. They thought it might help. It didn't.

His grandkids howled with laughter, and he beamed.

The Asian Reporter Foundation's  
20th Annual Scholarship & Awards  
banquet will be held on  
Thursday, April 26, 2018 at  
Wong's King Seafood Restaurant  
(8733 S.E. Division Street, Portland).

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