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

Difficulty level: Medium

#38689

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 #76629 (Easy)

All solutions available at www.sudoku.com.

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

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Slide over salsa: K-pop takes socialist Cuba by storm

By **Andrea Rodriguez**
The Associated Press

HAVANA, Cuba — Socialist Cuba, the birthplace of salsa and other rhythms that have conquered the world, is now surrendering to the invasion of South Korean pop music.

Thirteen thousand kilometers of distance separate the Asian nation and the communist-run island, as well as a different language and cultural traditions. However, all of these barriers would seem to vanish in a split second thanks to K-pop's infectious beat and elaborate choreography.

Korean popular music, or K-pop, has spread far and wide from its Asian roots as boy bands like BTS and NCT and their female counterpart Blackpink rival Taylor Swift for downloads and album sales globally.

But it was slow to catch on in Cuba, where salsa is king and internet speeds were glacial until recently.

On a recent Saturday, far from Seoul, dozens of teenagers clad in plaid, prep school skirts, baggy bomber pants, and heavy black eyeliner busted their best moves as images of the genre's idols were projected on a large screen of a Havana dance club.

"K-pop has opened a new world to me," said 24-year-old Fransico Piedra, who when not working with his father as a blacksmith dreams up meticulous dance steps. Known by his artistic name Ken he one day aspires to be a professional K-pop choreographer. "It's a place where I can be myself, and share with friends the joy of laughter, song, and dance."

Many of the teenagers hope to follow in the footsteps of two Cuban groups — Limitless and LTX — that before the pandemic travelled to South Korea to partake in the K-POP World Festival, an annual talent competition.

K-pop — a catch all for musical styles ranging from R&B to rock — first penetrated the island when Cubans fell in love with South Korean soap operas about a decade ago. As internet speeds improved, and government controls eased, more young Cubans got online and started streaming videos like teenagers everywhere.

As Thailand approves same-sex marriage, a couple celebrates feeling freed

By **Sakchai Lalit**
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — Kunchanok Khantiphong and Edward Jonathan Caiga were at work when Thailand's senate voted to allow same-sex marriages on a June afternoon.

At home that evening, the couple celebrated over hopeful conversations of how their lives would change. Marriage and building a family were important to both of them. Now it could become a reality.

Thailand's landmark marriage equality bill has been officially written into law, after it was endorsed by King Maha Vajiralongkorn. LGBTQ+ couples will be able to register marriages in January, making Thailand the third place in Asia, after Taiwan and Nepal, to allow same-sex marriage.

Caiga, who came to Thailand from the Philippines 17 years ago, said he's feeling more secure and confident knowing that he'll be able to live in his adopted home permanently, and to adopt a child or buy a home with his partner.

Displaying a tattoo that reads "Freed" across his right arm, Caiga says it is meant to express being freed from the negative perceptions of other people, whether it is about

Thailand's adorable pygmy hippo Moo Deng has the kind of face that launches a thousand memes

Continued from page 2

habitat. There are only 2,000 to 3,000 of them left in the wild.

To help fund the initiative, the zoo is making Moo Deng shirts and pants that will be ready for sale at the end of the month, with more merchandise to come.

Narongwit believes a factor of Moo Deng's fame is her name, which compliments her energetic and chaotic personality captured in Atthapon's creative captions and video clips.

Appropriately, Moo Deng likes to "deng," or bounce, and Atthapon has many moments of her giddy bouncing on social media. Even when she's not bouncing, the hippo is endlessly cute — squirming as Atthapon tries to wash her, biting him while he was trying to play with her, calmly closing her eyes as he rubs her pinkish

cheeks or her chubby belly.

Atthapon, who has worked at the zoo for eight years taking care of hippos, sloths, capybaras, and binturongs, said baby hippos are usually more playful and energetic, and they become calmer as they get older.

The zoo saw a spike in visitors since Moo Deng's fame — so much that the zoo now has to limit public access to the baby's enclosure to 5-minute windows throughout the day during weekends.

Narongwit said the zoo has been receiving more than 4,000 visitors during a weekday, up from around just 800 people, and more than 10,000 during a weekend, up from around 3,000 people.

But the fame has also brought some aggressive visitors to Moo Deng, who only wakes up ready to play about two

hours a day. Some videos showed visitors splashing water or throwing things at the sleeping Moo Deng to try to wake her up. The hippo pit now has a warning sign against throwing things at Moo Deng, posted prominently at the front in Thai, English, and Chinese.

Narongwit said the zoo would take action under the animal protection law if people mistreat the animal. But clips emerged of people treating Moo Deng poorly, and the backlash was fierce. The zoo director said that since then, they haven't seen anyone doing it again.

For fans who can't make the journey or are discouraged after seeing the crowds for Moo Deng, the Khao Kheow Open Zoo set up cameras and plans to start a 24-hour live feed of the baby hippo.



K-POP-ULARITY. Youths, top photo, dance to K-pop — popular Korean music — at a cultural house in Havana, Cuba. In the bottom photo, a K-pop follower wears a shirt displaying the image of singer G-Dragon of Korean band Big Bang, in Havana, Cuba. (AP Photos/Ramon Espinosa)

While Cuban kids may be mesmerized by K-pop, an older generation of leaders have had frostier ties to South Korea. The two countries only restored diplomatic relations that were severed following the 1959 Cuban revolution this year and have yet to exchange ambassadors. Meanwhile, Cuba remains a staunch ally of North Korea, which views K-pop as a dangerous form of propaganda from a capitalist enemy with whom it has been locked in a military standoff since the 1950s.



LANDMARK LGBTQ+ BILL. Participants hold posters celebrating equality in marriage during the Pride Parade in Bangkok, Thailand, on June 1, 2024. Thailand's landmark marriage equality bill has been officially written into law. The law will allow LGBTQ+ couples to register marriages in January. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit, File)

race, culture, or diversity.

"This law will help enforce further the fundamental necessities, which is fair to have for everyone who wants to spend the rest of their lives with the people they love," he said.

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