

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE IN ASIA

the japan times

INCORPORATING

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Weekend

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, DEC. 16-17, 2023

BUSINESS:
Place your bets
Mori Building boss eyes possible casino resort for the capital | **Page 3**

LONGFORM:
Wolf worship
A creature often reviled in the West is revered in Japan | **Page 10**

CULTURE:
Get in line
Art lovers thronged Tokyo's biggest art museums in 2023 | **Page 12**

IN TODAY'S NYT:
What it's like to be targeted by China's water cannons
Page 3

Superstar says club shares his passion and vision

Winning ways lead Ohtani to Dodgers

JASON COSKREY
STAFF WRITER

A one-of-a-kind talent who needs no introduction received a Hollywood intro anyway as Shohei Ohtani began his new chapter with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Thursday.

"I can't wait to join the Dodgers," Ohtani said during his introductory news conference. "They share the same passion as I do, they have a vision and history all about winning, and I share the same values."

Ohtani was arguably the most coveted free agent in MLB history this offseason after his historic six-year run with the Los Angeles Angels, where he signed in December 2017 after five seasons in Japan with the Hokkaido Nippon Ham Fighters. His free agency captivated the sports world and he revealed his highly anticipated decision on Instagram on Dec. 9.

"As far as why I chose the Dodgers, there's not really one reason, there are a lot of reasons," he said. "I met with a few teams at the

end of the negotiation process. Honestly, every team I met with and had a chance to talk to, they were all great and it was really a tough decision for me. At the end of the day, I had to choose one team, and the Dodgers were my choice."

Ohtani slipped into the team's iconic home uniform for the first time while on stage with interpreter Ippei Mizuhara, who came with him from the Angels, as well as Dodgers owner Mark Walter, the team's president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman and Ohtani's agent, Nez Balelo.

He declined to go into detail about his conversations with other teams — the Toronto Blue Jays were considered to be a strong contender to sign him — or about the particulars of the surgery he underwent in September to repair a UCL tear in his right elbow.

Ohtani signed a 10-year, \$700 million deal with the Dodgers that is believed to be the richest in worldwide sports history. The deal was structured in a unique way that will see Ohtani defer the vast majority of his salary,



Shohei Ohtani puts on a Dodgers cap and uniform during his introductory news conference in Los Angeles on Thursday. AFP-JJL

He will defer \$68 million of his annual salary and earn \$2 million a year during the contract. The deferrals will be paid out yearly from 2034 to 2043.

The contract gives the Dodgers the ability to continue to strengthen the team despite the massive cost of the deal. The Dodgers are already looking to take advantage, having met with Orix Buffaloes pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto, who is available to MLB teams via the posting system, on Tuesday. According to The Athletic, Ohtani was among the players present for the talks with the right-hander.

"I figured if I could defer as much money as I can, if that's going to help the Dodgers be able to sign better players and make a better team, I felt like that was worth it and I was willing to go in that direction," he said.

Ohtani has rewritten the MLB record book

Continued on page 6 →

COP28 deal may not halt catastrophic warming

©Analysis
GLORIA DICKIE
DUBAI
REUTERS

A deal for the world to transition away from fossil fuels was hailed as a historic achievement on Wednesday at the U.N. climate summit in Dubai, but there's a good chance it won't achieve its ultimate goal — holding global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

For months, COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber had described that 1.5 C limit — first stated in the 2015 Paris Agreement — as his "North Star" or guiding principle for the summit. Scientists say that a global temperature rise beyond 1.5 C above the preindustrial average will trigger catastrophic and irreversible impacts, from melting ice sheets to the collapse of ocean currents.

But year after year, that target slips further away — with the world's planet-warming emissions still rising, and temperatures hitting new heights. This year will be the hottest ever on record, with the global average for 2023 a sweltering 1.46 C above preindustrial levels. In terms of global warming, which is measured in terms of decades, the world has experienced nearly 1.2 C of warming.

The deal made in Dubai, called the "UAE Consensus," would see the world commit to transitioning away from "fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner ... so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science."

But scientists said that, while the pact was unprecedented, it still wasn't enough for that outcome to be realized.

"It's a landmark result because it's the first time we've said we're going to reduce fossil fuel use," said James Dyke, an earth systems scientist at the University of Exeter in Britain. "But you can forget about 1.5 C."

The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the main scientific body which informs the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, has said that limiting warming to 1.5 C with no or limited overshoot would require

Continued on page 5 →

Kishida's ratings hit dangerous low amid scandal

KANAKO TAKAHARA
STAFF WRITER

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's support rate is in dangerous territory after plunging to 17% — the worst figure for a prime minister from the Liberal Democratic Party in more than a decade — following a political funds scandal involving his party.

In a Jiji poll released Thursday evening, the support rate for Kishida's Cabinet was 17.1%, down from 21.3% the previous

month. In September 2009, then-Prime Minister Taro Aso's administration registered a rate of 13.4% just before the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan came into power.

The LDP's support rate is suffering as well, slumping to 18.3% — the lowest figure since the party regained power in December 2012.

In the Jiji poll, 86% said the five LDP factions accused of underreporting income from fundraising events — the focus of

the scandal — have not offered sufficient explanations regarding the money, while only 3.1% said they have. The survey was conducted from Dec. 8 through Monday and involved 2,000 people, of which 59.4% offered valid answers. The survey was conducted prior to further revelations about the value of funds that had not been reported.

Kishida has been trying to minimize the damage from the scandal, in which the factions gave the unreported money from ticket sales for parties to their members, many of

whom also did not report the funds.

Under the political funds law, political groups need to report revenue from such events if any individual person or company purchases more than ¥200,000 (\$1,400) worth of tickets in a year. As long as the flow of money is reported in line with the law, there is nothing wrong with holding fund-raising parties or offering kickbacks to faction members for ticket sales.

The group suspected to have the largest amount of unreported income — about

¥500 million — is the faction that was led by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Amid mounting criticism and to minimize the damage, Kishida has replaced 12 Abe faction members who held Cabinet or senior government positions, including removing Hirokazu Matsuno as chief cabinet secretary. Three LDP executives are also set to be replaced.

Kishida, who has banned his party from holding fundraising events for the time

Continued on page 2 →



Savor the holidays
This oven-less Christmas "roast" is on the menu, no matter the kitchen size | **FOOD, PAGE 14**

Why host a World Expo?
Cities should jump at the chance to hold international events | **OPINION, PAGE 9**

All talk, no aid
The EU grants Ukraine membership talks, but could not agree on more aid | **WORLD, PAGE 4**

ISSN 0289-1956 © THE JAPAN TIMES, LTD., 2023

Consumption tax included
(本体価格¥364) **¥400**

4910856491630
00364

Lai trial puts China's H.K. crackdown in focus

HONG KONG
REUTERS

A long-awaited national security trial opens in Hong Kong on Monday for leading China critic and media tycoon Jimmy Lai, who faces possible life imprisonment on charges he colluded with foreign forces including the United States.

Foreign envoys, business people and legal scholars will be watching the trial closely, saying it looms as a fresh diplomatic flashpoint and a key test for the city's judicial independence and freedoms under the sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing in 2020.

Lai, 76, the founder of now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily and one of the most prominent Hong Kong critics of China's Communist Party leadership, has faced a salvo of litigation since a wave of pro-democracy demonstrations in 2019.

He faces several charges under the law, including collusion with foreign forces — a count that involves calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese officials.

Lai, whom China's foreign ministry this



week called a "notorious anti-China element," also faces a charge under older sedition laws, with six senior journalists and executives at his Apple Daily newspaper also arrested.

He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Lai is already serving a five-year, nine-month jail term for a fraud conviction over a lease dispute involving his newspaper.

Hong Kong and Chinese authorities say the city's rule of law is robust and all are

Media mogul Jimmy Lai has faced a salvo of litigation since pro-democracy demonstrations took hold in Hong Kong in 2019.
REUTERS

treated equally before it. Both Hong Kong and Chinese officials say the security legislation was needed to restore stability to the former British colony.

But some close to Lai take a dimmer view, noting the use of the law's powers to deny the media mogul bail, block a jury trial, and allow the city's pro-Beijing leader to appoint three high court judges who will hear the case.

"Any talk of justice would be a farce," said Sebastian Lai, one of his sons, from London, where he recently met the British Foreign Secretary David Cameron. "Everyone knows it's going to be a show trial."

People familiar with the case say it could last more than 80 days.

The U.S. government has repeatedly called for Lai's release, saying his case is politically motivated and part of an ongoing security clampdown that has all but dissolved the city's opposition democrats, with many jailed or fleeing into exile.

On Thursday, Hong Kong police added five more overseas-based activists to a list of wanted people, offering bounties for information leading to their arrest in a continuing

Continued on page 4 →

Are you a bilingual Japanese looking for a job where you can take advantage of your language skills? Are you a recruiter seeking a candidate to fill a specific position?

the japan times Jobs

The Japan Times Jobs is a recruitment consultancy that specializes in matching skilled professionals with diverse industries and sectors that require English or other language skills.

Free job consultations available at:
jobs.japantimes.com

To companies seeking workers:
Our recruitment advisers, each specializing in specific industries and job types, will offer extensive support, reduce the costs and burden of the recruiting process and only introduce you to those candidates who best suit your needs and requirements.

The Japan Times Jobs offers its job consultation service in collaboration with Workport Inc.