

Groton Daily Independent

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Chicken Soup
for the Soul.



"SELF-CARE IS NEVER A SELFISH ACT - IT IS SIMPLY GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF THE ONLY GIFT I HAVE. THE GIFT I WAS PUT ON EARTH TO OFFER OTHERS."

- PARKER PALMER



GHS
Graduation

On GDILIVE.COM
Sunday, May 16, 2021, 2 p.m.
Groton Area High School Arena



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, May 16, 2021

Newsletter Items Due

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Conde Ad Council 5:00 PM

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Groton Ad Council 7:00 PM

Thursday, May 20, 2021

UMW 1:30 PM

Important PPR Meeting in Groton 7:00 PM

Sunday, May 23, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, May 16

9 a.m.: Worship with Communion

Monday, May 17

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

Sunday, May 23

9 a.m.: Worship

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am
Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, May 16, 2021

Bible Study, 8 a.m.

Worship with Holy Communion

St. John's Worship, 9 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Worship 11 a.m.

Monday, May 17, 2021

Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 PM

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Quilting, 12:20 p.m.

Sunday, May 23, 2021

Bible Study, 8 a.m.

St. John's Worship, 9 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Worship 11 a.m.

Heaven Bound Ministries

Pierpont

Buffalo Lake Lutheran

Rural Eden

Sunday, May 16: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 22: Worship at Pierpont, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 23: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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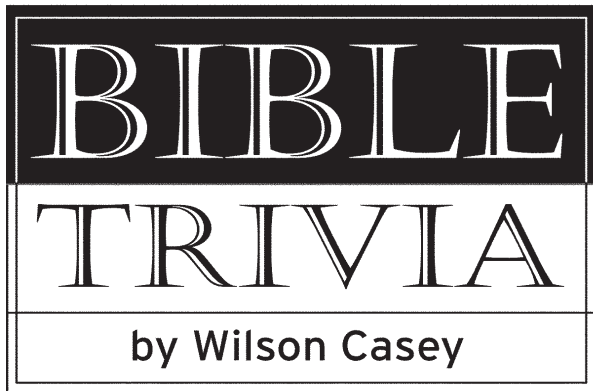
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. PSALM 50:1-3

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"GOOD NEWS... WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF THE WOODS."



1. Is the book of Damascus in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Who did the people of Malta think was a god when he was unaffected by the viper's bite? *Job, Paul, Timothy, Stephen*

3. To whom did Naaman the Syrian ask forgiveness after worshipping the god Rimmon? *Saul, Christ, Elisha, Darius*

4. From John 3, who was a Pharisee and ruler among the Jews? *Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, Judas, Peter*

5. Who was known as the "Supplanter"? *Aaron, Moses, Jacob, Hosea*

6. What was the name of David's first wife? *Rachel, Priscilla, Michal, Ruth*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Paul; 3) Elisha; 4) Nicodemus; 5) Jacob; 6) Michal

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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Graduation Loose Meat Sandwiches

Whether your graduate is receiving a diploma from high school or college, you'll probably want to share the special occasion with family and friends. Here's a recipe guaranteed to head the "honor roll" of party celebration foods.

2 pounds extra-lean ground sirloin beef or turkey breast

1 1/2 cups finely chopped onion

2 cups diet cola

2 teaspoons parsley flakes

1/8 teaspoon black pepper

12 small hamburger buns

1. In a large skillet sprayed with butter-flavored cooking spray, brown meat and onion. Add diet cola, parsley flakes and black pepper. Mix well to combine. Lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until most of the moisture evaporates, stirring occasionally.

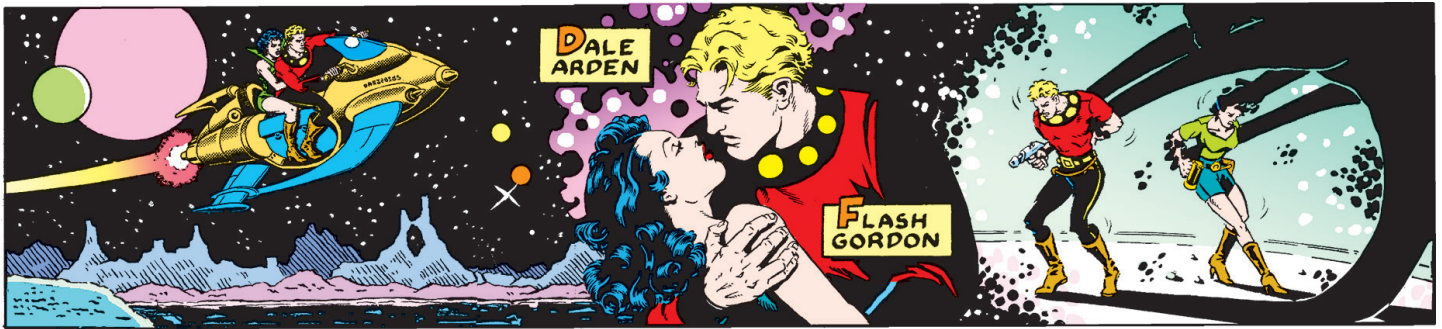
2. For each sandwich, spoon about 1/3 cup meat mixture between a hamburger bun. Serves 12.

* Each serving equals: 199 calories, 7g fat, 18g protein, 16g carb., 232mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 Starch.

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FLASH GORDON By JIM KEEFE

5-9

VULTAN TO FLASH...
MIST IS IMPAIRING VISIBILITY. WE'RE GOING DOWN TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

COPY THAT, VULTAN. SO FAR NO SIGNS OF ENEMY SHIPS.

FLASH, RADAR'S PICKING UP MULTIPLE SIGNALS. THEY SEEM TO BE TAKING OFF FROM THE MOUNTAIN!

THOSE AREN'T SPACECRAFT...
VULTAN, BACK TO THE SHIP... NOW!

IGNORING FLASH'S WARNING OF POSSIBLE DANGER, VULTAN AND HIS HAWKMEN TAKE TO THE SKIES IN SEARCH OF THE DOWNED ARBORIAN CRAFT.

VULTAN CRACKLES TO THE CRACKLES

LOSING YOUR SIGNAL, FLASH. REPEAT, LOSING YOUR SIGNA...

BY TAO!

TO BE CONT'D

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S TECHNIQUE IS THE KEY TO WINNING AT GOLF. BECOMING AND REMAINING CONFIDENT TAKES CONTINUOUS WORK, NO MATTER HOW NATURALLY TALENTED A PERSON MAY BE.

PLAYING JUST FOR EXERCISE AND FRESH AIR IS FINE IF THAT'S WHAT SATISFIES YOU. TO BECOME AND REMAIN A WINNER, BE PREPARED TO PRACTICE AT LEAST AS MUCH AS YOU PLAY - REMEMBERING THAT THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN SOME ELEMENT OF YOUR GAME.

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Removal Is Best Option for Tumor Inside Kidney

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 62 years of age and in excellent health. I run or hike 3 miles or more on most days, and road bike, swim and weight train. I eat sensibly, and I don't drink, smoke or take drugs. I don't drink coffee or even take aspirin for pain. My last physical exam showed no problems, and my blood and urine tests were fine.

Recently, I was diagnosed with a small tumor inside my right kidney. It's about a 2.5 cm solid mass with no rough edges at this time. The MRI showed "a 2.4 cm mildly enhancing solid mass concerning for a renal neoplasm." It also showed that the left kidney has a single 1.2 cm cortical cyst over its upper pole aspect. Please explain what this means.

The options for treatment are to completely remove the kidney and see if it is cancerous or just monitor the tumor and see if it continues to grow and remove later. The doctor said the whole kidney has to be removed, because of the central location of the tumor. The doctor also said a biopsy is not a good idea where the mass is located for fear of releasing cancerous cells within the kidney that could move quickly throughout the body. Removal is a drastic measure, no doubt, to test for kidney cancer. Should I just monitor and wait to see what the tumor does or operate and have the kidney removed. What medical action do you suggest that I do? -- B.J.R.

ANSWER: I am sorry to hear about your kidney tumor. A solitary kidney mass in a man in his 60s is always suspicious for kidney cancer. A 2.4 cm tumor is large enough to provoke serious concern: In a recent study, in people who had their tumors removed, 83 percent of tumors that size were kidney cancer.

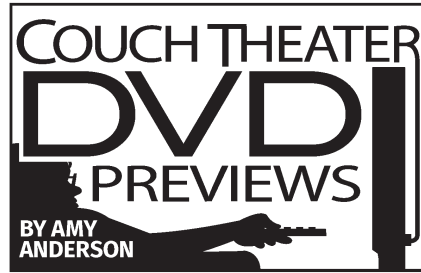
Because of the location, a partial removal of just the mass is impossible, so the choice between watching and waiting versus taking the whole tumor out should take into consideration the very high likelihood that this is cancer. Kidney cancer can spread to other organs. If you were my patient, I likely would advise surgery. If you were not a good risk for surgery (say, in your 80s with multiple medical problems), then I might consider watchful waiting. In your case, I think going for surgery is the wiser course. Being so healthy will make your treatment much less risky.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Does BPH increase the possibility of prostate cancer? -- A.L.

ANSWER: Benign prostatic hypertrophy is a common condition in men. About half of men in their 50s have an enlarged prostate, and the proportion gets even higher as men age. The major symptoms of enlarged prostate are difficulty with urine flow, a sensation of decreased emptying, difficulty initiating urination, and increased frequency of urinating, including at night. As symptoms worsen, incontinence can occur and even kidney damage may result due to the high pressure in the bladder.

The first word in "BPH" is "benign": It is not a cancerous condition. It does not protect against developing cancer, but there does not appear to be an increased risk for cancer among men with symptoms of BPH, according to the most recent studies.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.



The catalog of films available to watch on any given platform is immense. Some days I feel like I spend more time with the TV guide and movie menu than I do actually watching a movie. When you just aren't sure what to watch, you can draw inspiration to guide you to a new discovery. For example, May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and there is a wonderful selection of films starring or directed by entertainers from this background. Here are a few to get you started:

Crazy Rich Asians — A regular gal, Rachel Chu (Constance Wu), joins her seemingly normal longtime boyfriend on a trip to his best friend's wedding — and back home to meet his family. Henry Goulding plays Nick Young, the boyfriend in question — considerate, elegant, with a six-pack that won't stop. What Rachel doesn't know is that Nick's family is, well, crazy rich, and the couple is greeted with nonstop elaborate displays of ostentatiousness as soon as they hit Singapore. Michelle Yeoh plays Nick's disapproving mother, and comedy relief comes from Rachel's college friend Peik Lin, played by a hilarious Awkwafina, along with Ken Jeong, as Peik Lin's dad. An absolute must-see!

The Farewell (PG) — Awkwafina heads this touching family drama as Billi, a young Chinese woman whose adored grandmother is discovered to have cancer. The family decides not to tell her, and instead gathers the relatives together for an improvised wedding celebration as cover. Billi struggles with both the family's decision and to fit in with the old ways of doing

things, all the while savoring sweet moments with family.

Always Be My Maybe — Ali Wong and Randall Park play two childhood friends — one now a highly successful chef, the other lives with his dad and performs locally in a band. After a brief fling, they part ways, but are reconnected when Ali comes home to San Francisco. It's a sweet story of ambition, finding oneself and reconnecting with what's truly important in life.

Better Luck Tomorrow — A groundbreaking film from director Justin Lin, who later went on to acclaim directing several "Fast and Furious" films, "Better Luck Tomorrow" follows a group of high-achievement Asian-American students whose



A24

Awkwafina in "The Farewell"

relentless pursuit of academic achievement and the excruciating expectations placed on them lead to an increasing level of involvement in petty crime, drugs, larceny and eventually felony. Stars Parry Shen, Jason Tobin, Sung Kang, Roger Fan and John Cho.

The Tiger Hunter — This comedy by director Lena Khan stars Danny Pudi, better known as Abed on the television show "Community." He plays Sami, an educated immigrant from India who comes to the United States with dreams of success in engineering — success great enough to impress the woman of his dreams, who he left behind in India; and to follow the legacy of his father, "the world's most glorious tiger hunter."

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1. Bonnie Tyler released "It's A Heartache" in 1977. Name the other two female artists who released cover versions the following year.

2. Which Scottish band released "Love Hurts"?

3. Who wrote and released "Clap for the Wolfman"?

4. Which artist released "Material Girl"?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "It was so easy livin' day by day, Out of touch with the rhythm and blues, But now I need a little give and take."

Answers

1. Juice Newton and Ronnie Spector.

2. Nazareth, in 1975. It was first released in 1960 by the Everly Brothers as an album track, never a single. The song has been covered by many, including Roy Orbison, Jennifer Warnes and Jim Capaldi

from Traffic.

3. The Guess Who, in 1974. The song was about Wolfman Jack, the famous DJ. He's heard speaking on the recording.

4. Madonna, in 1984.

5. "New York State of Mind," by Billy Joel in 1976. The song was never released as a single but became a favorite anyway, one that Joel played at benefit concerts all around New York after 9/11. He wrote the song after moving to the East Coast from Los Angeles.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



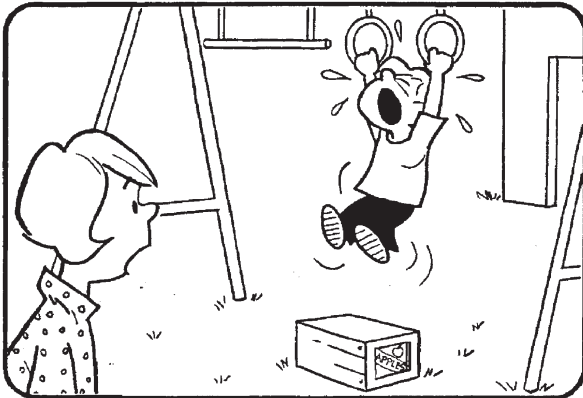
GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



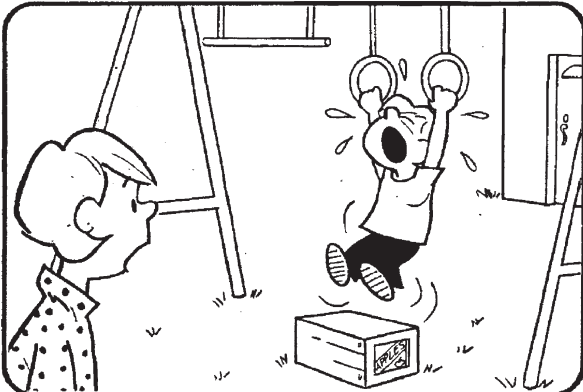
"We can have the union labels made cheaper in China."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Rings are lower. 2. Shirt is different. 3. Crate is different. 4. Door is closed. 5. Sleeve is shorter. 6. Hair is different.



- There are many fancy cleaners for sale for wood and laminate floors. Truth is, all you need is regular sweeping and a clean, damp mop. Never use harsh cleaners on wood, and do not use too much moisture.

- D.D. in Missouri keeps morning cereal crisp by using two bowls. Bite by bite dipped in milk is the perfect remedy for avoiding a soggy spoonful!

- Use white chalk to fill pin holes in the wall before painting. You can also use this tactic to hide holes if you are unable to paint the white walls of a rental. It simply fills the hole, making it “disappear.”

- Save prescription medicine bottles and use them to sort beads or findings for beadwork or jewelry making.

Bonus: Store the bottles upside down in a plastic storage bin so you can see what’s in the bottles without having to sort through all of them.

- Add chocolate syrup to your cake mix for a deliciously deep flavor when making a chocolate cake.

- Check your pillows: Press into the pillow at the spot where your head rests. If the pillow doesn’t spring back when you remove your hands, it’s time to replace it.

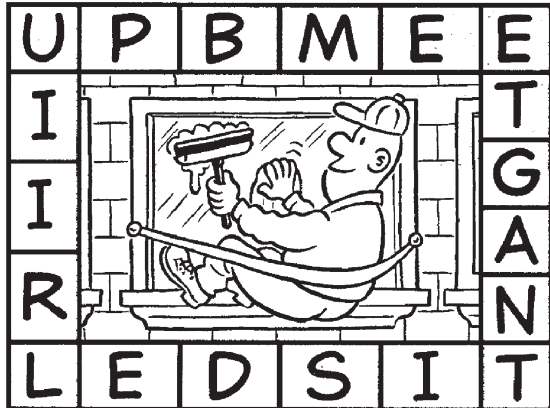
- Add these to the list of items to eliminate the odor of cooking cabbage: a heel of bread, a whole walnut or a pinch of baking soda.

Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

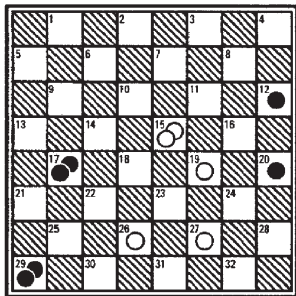


HANDS ON! Can you prove that 11 plus 2 equals 1? Answer in 10 seconds. P.S.: It's tricky.

Answer: 11 o'clock plus 2 hours equals 1 o'clock.

WAY UP THERE! Hidden above in the frame of letters is the name of a favorite tourist attraction. You can discover what it is by reading every other letter in the frame as you go around it in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. The trick is to start at the correct letter. You'll find a hint in the picture.

Answer: Starting at "E" in the upper right-hand corner and reading counterclockwise you'll get "Empire State Building."



LET'S PLAY! Here's another cracker-barrel checker challenge. You're playing with the white checkers and your pieces are moving up the board. It's your move and if you're as good a player as I think you are, you should be able to win in just seven moves. How is it done?

Answer: Move 27 to 24, 20 to 27, 26 to 22, 17 to 19, 19 to 16, 12 to 19 and 15 to 22. Black is now trapped and the game is yours.

QUIZ KIDS! Our two contestants must answer five questions worth one point each. Help them by entering their answers below. Post the final scores above each player.

JOHNNY'S QUESTIONS

1. What is the capital of Norway? _____
2. A conjurer is a _____.
3. In which country is the Aswan High Dam? _____
4. The Wizard of Menlo Park was _____.
5. The planet closest to the sun is _____.

ALICE'S QUESTIONS

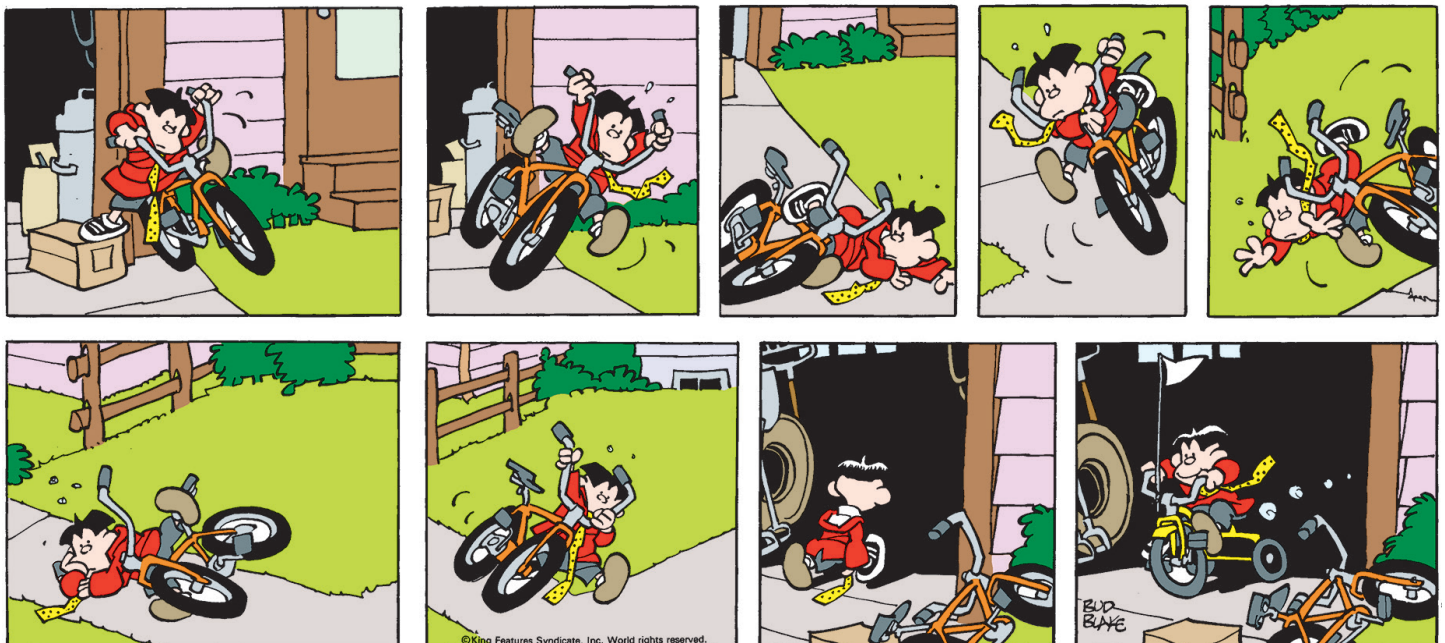
1. Where are the Everglades? _____
2. Old Faithful is a _____.
3. What are horse operas? _____
4. Young seals are called _____.
5. The Eternal City is _____.

Answers: (Johnny's) 1. Oslo, 2. Magician, 3. Egypt, 4. Thomas Edison, 5. Mercury. (Alice's) 1. Florida, 2. Geyser, 3. Cowboy movies, 4. Pups, 5. Rome.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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BUD BLAKE

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Green shade
- 5 Police officer
- 8 Achy
- 12 Last writes?
- 13 Coach
Parseghian
- 14 Bard's river
- 15 Besides
- 17 Hatchling's
home
- 18 Bagel choice
- 19 Aquarium
favorites
- 21 Weir
- 22 Mediocre
- 23 Fan's cry
- 26 '60s war zone
- 28 Entrap
- 31 Coup d' —
- 33 "The Voice"
network
- 35 "My Way"
composer
- 36 Event location
- 38 "Eureka!"
- 40 Speck
- 41 Zwei follower
- 43 Literary rep
- 45 Move fast
- 47 Wiped out
- 51 Teen fave
- 52 Oliver Twist's
request
- 54 Margarita gar-
nish
- 55 Leading lady?
- 56 Buffalo's lake
- 57 "A Room of

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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- Own"
- 58 Sailor
- 59 Grit
- DOWN**
- 1 May honorees
- 2 Bassoon's kin
- 3 Round Table
titles
- 4 Lieu
- 5 Neanderthal
- 6 Raw mineral
- 7 Medicare sec-
tion
- 8 "Evil Ways"
band
- 9 Type of vol-
- 10 Activist Parks
- 11 Tolkien crea-
tures
- 16 Muscat's land
- 20 Overhead
trains
- 23 Speed (up)
- 24 Devoured
- 25 Good-looking
- 27 CEO's deg.
- 29 "Top Hat" stu-
dio
- 30 Chow down
- 32 Swimming
reptiles
- 34 Smooth talker
- 37 Shoe width
- 39 Malaria symp-
tom
- 42 Map within a
map
- 44 London
newspaper
- 45 Hawaiian city
- 46 Tennis score
- 48 Asta's feeder
- 49 Ireland
- 50 Monopoly
card
- 53 Eggs

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

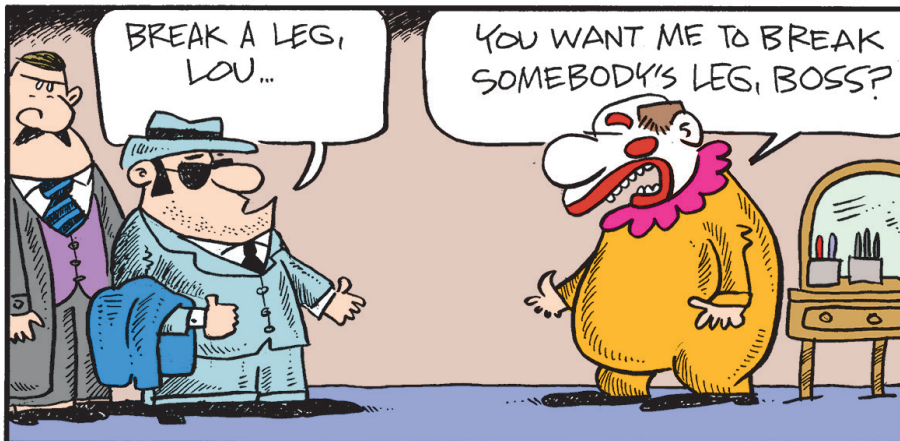
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| R | A | H | | N | A | M | | S | N | A | R | E |
| E | T | A | T | | N | B | C | | A | N | K | A |
| V | E | N | U | E | | A | H | A | | D | O | T |
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LAFF - A - DAY



"Remember how depressed I was this morning?"

Out on a Limb



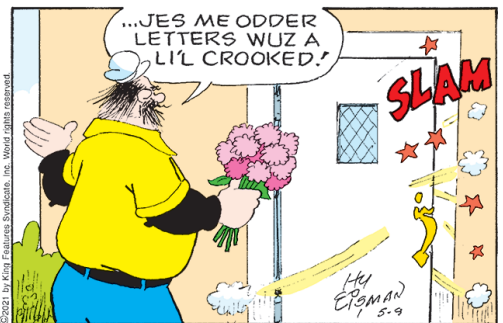
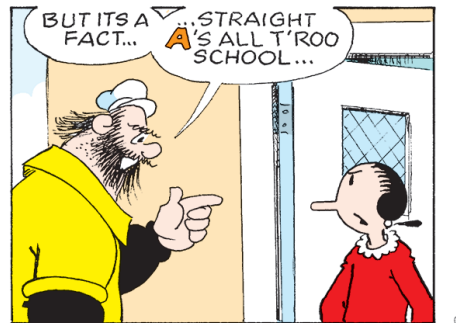
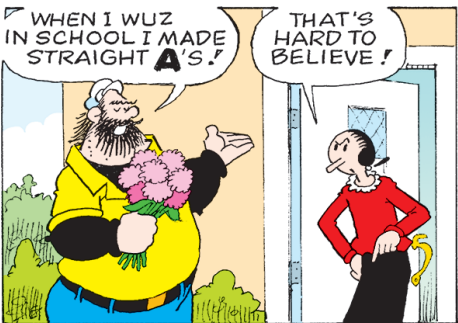
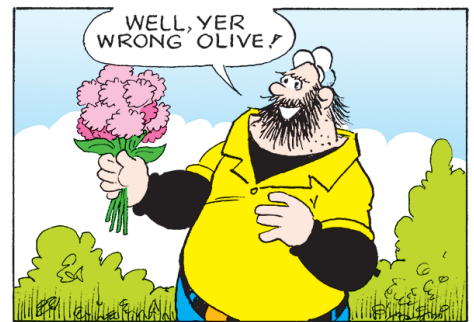
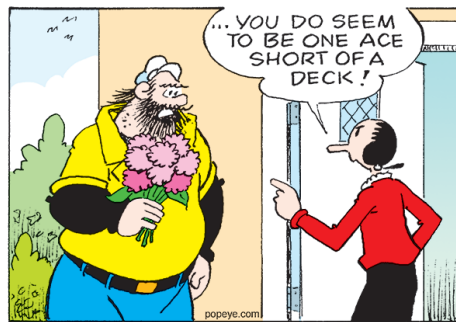
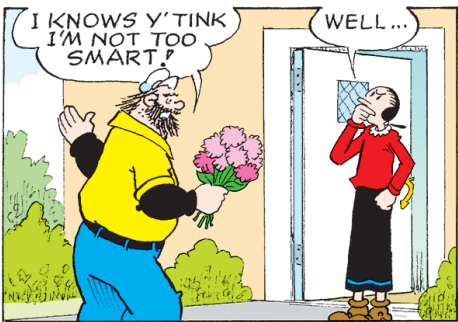
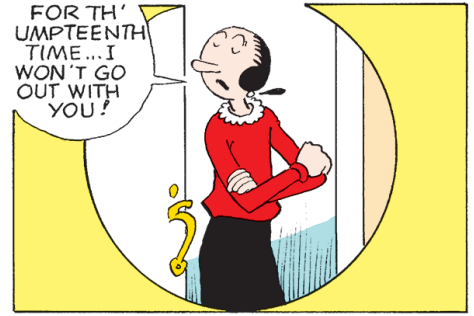
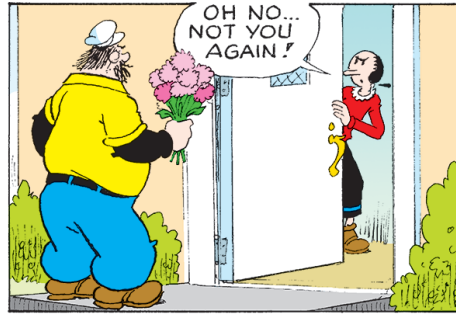
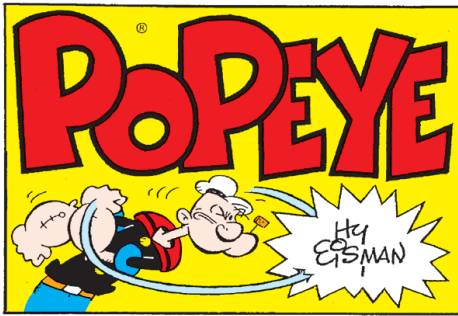
by Gary Kopervas

BACKSTAGE
OPENING NIGHT OF
LA COSA NOSTRA
COMMUNITY
THEATRE

KOPERVAS

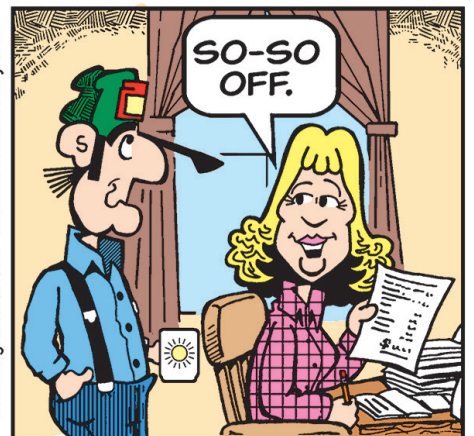
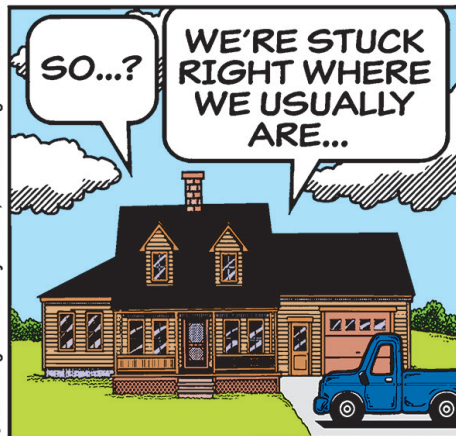
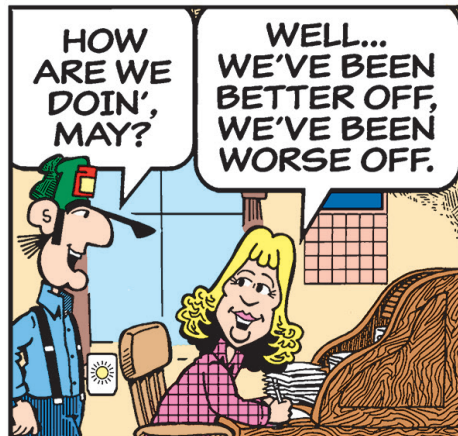
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's
**Prince
Valiant**
By Gianni and Schultz

VAL AND HIS COMPANIONS WAKE FROM A STRANGE SLEEP. IT SEEMS TO VAL THAT MERLIN'S VISIT WAS A DREAM...



...BUT HERE IS PRUDENCE ALIVE...



... AND HERE ARE MERLIN'S GLOWING SORCERER'S STONES, RETURNED!



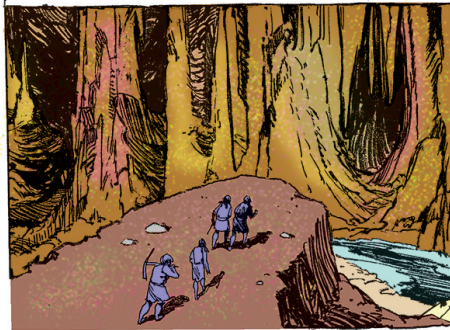
"AS MERLIN DEPARTED, HE SPOKE OF TROLLENBERG'S DEATH," SAYS GAWAIN. "WE ARE LOST WITHOUT HIM." PRUDENCE SPEAKS: "WE MUST SEARCH FOR AN UPDRAFT."



"MERLIN MUST HAVE LEFT A SIGN," OPINES VAL. "I SAY WE FOLLOW THE RIVER," OFFERS GAWAIN. "WE MUST FEEL FOR ANY UPSWEEP IN THE AIR!" REPEATS PRUDENCE.

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"OR PERHAPS RETRACE ITS COURSE," COUNTERS VAL. "I CANNOT THINK WITHOUT FOOD," GROWLS GAWAIN. "WOULD YOU LORDS IGNORE A MERE HANDMAIDEN AND ROT HERE?" BARKS PRUDENCE.



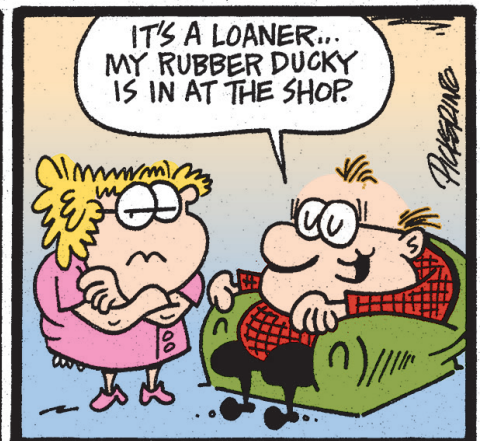
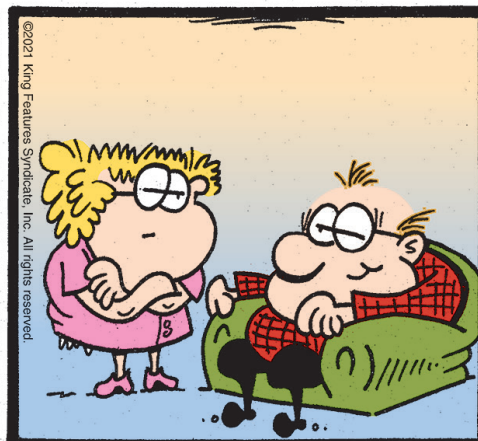
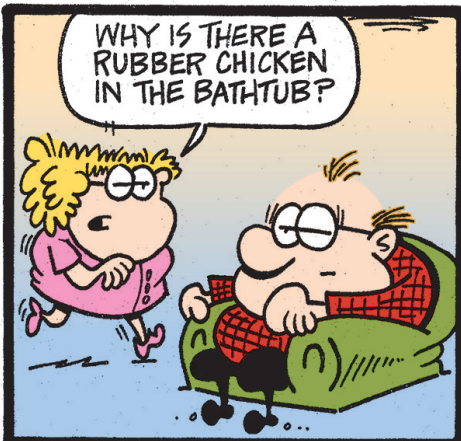
"AS A CHILD, THE SEA CAVES OF TINTAGEL WERE MY PLAYGROUNDS! DO NOT DISMISS MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD!"

NEXT:
The giant's breath

83-14-10

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Favorite Foods Missing From Grocery Shelves

You'd think that the grocery store shortages would be long gone by now. But no ... they never completely went away. Only the missing items have changed.

My neighbor and I laugh and compare notes about "the toilet paper of the month," recalling the long period when getting name-brand toilet paper was impossible around here. At this point, the missing item is a type of soup, which has been gone for nearly four weeks. A particular flavor of baked beans, gone. No-salt canned green beans, vanished. Jasmine rice, steel-cut oatmeal, low-sodium tuna ... no more. Even the tags are missing from store shelves in all three shopping locations here, and managers can't order them.

My neighbor and I weren't laughing today, however, when we realized it had been a full month since a certain chocolate bar had been seen on shelves in any store here. "We're in trouble," she said, and she's right. "Do we dare order it online?" she wondered? We're

considering doing just that.

The worst, though, was when I couldn't find the one cat food my elderly kitty is supposed to eat. For health issues, she can't have anything else. I finally called the manufacturer and was told that they were unable to produce it due to lack of ingredients. Eventually, and just in time, it became available and I ordered a three-month supply. But it's something I now track on a weekly basis.

Here's what I found after contacting a few food manufacturers: Many of them are cutting out, forever, products that were slow movers. If certain food items have vanished from your store's shelves, it might be time to do an online search. Look for "discontinued foods." You could discover that it's time to stop looking because those items just aren't coming back.

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1. Nicknamed “Hefty Lefty,” this quarterback tallied four completions for 28 yards for the Super Bowl champion New York Giants in 2007. Who is he?

2. Who holds the NBA record for technical fouls in a career?

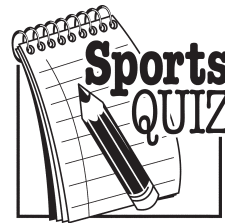
3. Name the novelist who wrote “Beartown” and “Us Against You,” which both take place in a small, hockey-obsessed community in Sweden.

4. The Tim Hortons Brier is the Canadian men’s championship in what sport?

5. In 1930, Chicago Cubs catcher Gabby Hartnett caught a baseball dropped 800 feet from what?

6. What Yale football player and coach became known as the “Father of American Football” for creating many of the sport’s rules?

7. Baseball historian and author Peter Nash (aka Prime Minister Pete Nice) was a member of what early



by Ryan A. Berenz

1990s rap music group?

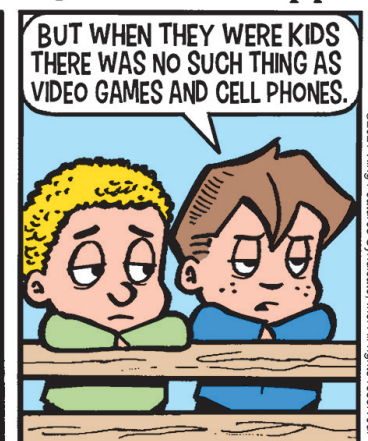
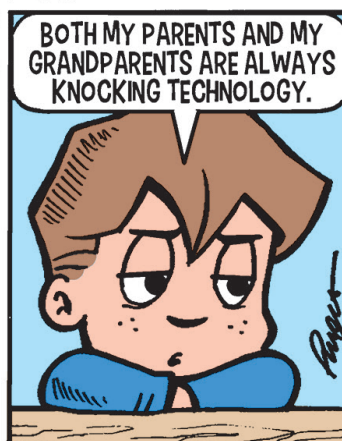
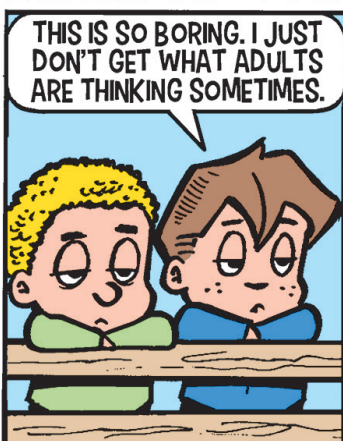
Answers

1. Jared Lorenzen.
2. Rasheed Wallace, with 317.
3. Fredrik Backman.
4. Curling.
5. A Goodyear Blimp.
6. Walter Camp.
7. 3rd Bass.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Donate Locally to Shelters, Rescues

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I read your recent article on animal shelters. It was spot on with advice for donors. Many rescues do not advertise locally, but online through Petfinder.com and AdoptAPet.com. Local advertising and signs usually result in animals being deposited on a rescue's property without invitation or contact.

If people want to help, please research your local area and find a rescue. Contact them and see what they need. Most rescues need specific foods, medicines, etc., and always need monetary contributions. These are the best ways to help out, through contact and conversations with the people involved. Local animal control and shelters can use help too.

One of the most important things to remember is that almost all rescues are nonprofit, charitable entities. All donations, money or otherwise, go completely to helping out the animals. There are no "salaries" for the persons running the organization as there are with so many other "charities." Just research online the salaries paid out with contributions from the public for many common charities that many donate to each year.

Do I speak from experience? Yes. My wife and I have been doing dog rescue for 16 years, ever since she returned home from helping in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina left so many animals needing rescue and help getting back with their families. We have helped close to 1,600 rescues find forever, loving homes. — *R.M., SusieQ DogResQ, Inc.*

DEAR R.M.: Thank you for this insider info. It confirms that acting locally to help animals, either through donating supplies or money or your time, can have the greatest impact.

Send your questions, comments or tips to ask@pawscorner.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Are you one of those folks who paces while talking on the phone? Psychologists believe this may be a kind of coping mechanism to make up for lack of body language and nonverbal cues that normally accompany conversation.

* A chef traditionally wears white because the chef of the first prime minister of France (1815) believed it was the most hygienic of all colors.

* The shape of the Coca-Cola bottle is patterned after a cacao seed pod.

* In 1995, Chris "Fenderman" Black got hitched to his Fender Stratocaster guitar that he'd purchased 35 years earlier, after his real wife quipped that he spent so much time with it, he should marry it.

* Early Hoover vacuum cleaners were hard to sell because potential customers refused to believe they could have that much dirt in their carpets.

* Plane exhaust kills more people than plane crashes. Approximately 10,000 people die annually from toxic airplane pollutants.

* Argentine goalkeeper Sergio Goycochea would crouch down and covertly urinate on the field before every penalty shootout for good luck. He started the ritual during the 1990 World Cup quarterfinals and continued it for the rest of his career.

* "Hurkle-durkle" is an old Scottish word meaning to lie in bed after it's time to get up and get going.

* A New Jersey man bought a \$5 bottle of orange juice, which his wife deemed too expensive and sent him back to return. He bought two Powerball lottery tickets with the refund and ended up winning the jackpot worth \$315.3 million.

Thought for the Day: "I think that you have to believe in your destiny, that you will succeed; you will meet a lot of rejection and it is not always a straight path, there will be detours -- so enjoy the view."
--Michael York

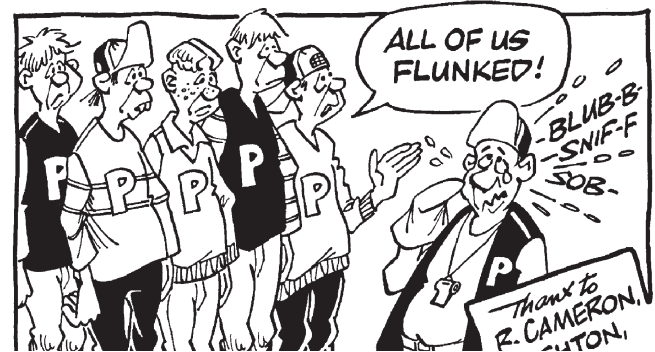
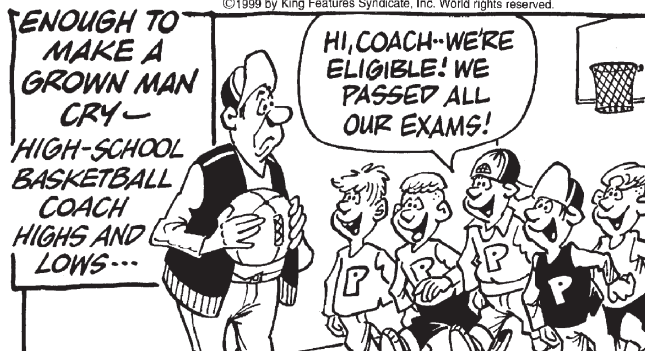
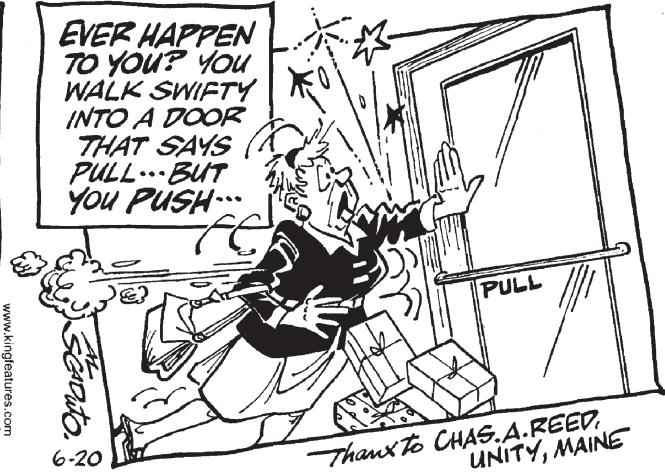
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO





Toad homes



Having toads on your property is very beneficial. They prey on insects, slugs and snails. While not as closely tied to the water as frogs, they still need a moist place to live, often making their homes under boards, porches, loose rocks, and tree roots. You can provide a "toad cave" in your garden by laying a clay pot on the ground on its side, and burying the lower half in the soil, or setting a clay pot upside down on the ground, and dig the earth away from its edge in one spot, forming a small tunnel for the toad to access the inside of his new home.

- Brenda Weaver

Source: gardeningknowhow.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Once-Homeless Vets Test Job Market

In the month since the homeless veterans had moved into the attic dormitory, three of them had gotten jobs of one kind or another. Sarge had gone banging on doors up and down the main street, looking for available work within walking distance.

The accountant-to-be, he of the formerly long hair and a face hidden by an immense beard, was keeping books and answering phones afternoons at a real estate office, wearing a clip-on tie and a collared shirt with the sleeves rolled down to cover the tattoos on his arm.

Another veteran was only working three nights a week washing dishes at a restaurant. "But he's trying," said Sarge. "He was out on the streets a long time, has PTSD, and a noisy restaurant kitchen is hard on him. He goes outside a couple times each shift

and does breathing exercises with the stress app on his phone. He's really trying. Restaurant owner loves him."

The third dormitory veteran was working the building supplies pro desk at the hardware store, quietly mulling his options. "Store manager called me," said Sarge as we stood outside the coffee shop's back door. "Asked if I knew my veteran had once owned a construction company. I did not know that."

Sarge had looked the guy up online and found an old website full of what he said were the most beautiful, high-end kitchens he'd ever seen, along with additions and custom playhouses. "And our boy was the company owner. He never said a word. Never says much of anything."

"But here," he said, pulling some pages out of his pocket and handing them to me. "I found these drawings in the trash."

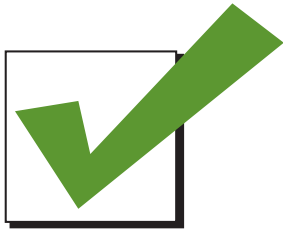
The sketches were floor plans for tiny homes with storage built-ins and loft bedroom space. At the top of the pages was the notation Veterans Village. The veteran's initials were penciled in the lower corner.

Sarge smiled. "At least we know what he's thinking about."

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Help Wanted

More than 36% of all Americans are fully vaccinated. Our nation is on track to get back to "normal."

But if we really want to get back to normal, that means getting back to work. If you walk down Main Street in most towns across America, you'll spot "Help Wanted" signs in most windows. There are more than eight million job openings in our country right now, but nearly ten million Americans aren't working.

The April American jobs report significantly underperformed. Economists were anticipating over one million new jobs added to the workforce, but employment only rose by 266,000 jobs in April. We know our economy can only thrive if there's a workforce to meet the demand of small businesses.

Over the last several months I've heard from South Dakota business owners struggling to fill open spots – they are busier than ever but finding workers has been a hurdle. South Dakota's Retailers Association said this is impacting mom & pop businesses the most.

When I ask these business owners why they can't find workers, they tell me that it doesn't help that the federal enhanced unemployment pays many people more to stay at home than to work. Workers continue to receive an extra \$300 a week on top of what they are already receiving in unemployment benefits.

So why not pay workers more? Well that's the thing, most of these jobs are paying well above minimum wage.

The government created this problem and it's our job to fix it, that's why Senator Roger Marshall and I introduced the Get Americans Back to Work Act. Our bill would step down the enhanced federal unemployment benefit between now and June 30, returning us to the system that was in place before the pandemic.

It's past time to get America back to work, and my bill does that.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Stronger Families Together

In South Dakota, we help our neighbors. It's just part of who we are. My parents instilled that in me at a very young age. We'd check on families in our community who were struggling. In fact, when I was a little girl, my parents brought a foster boy into our family.

My foster brother faced some challenges. I remember my parents telling me years later that they wished they would have had more tools, more information, or more training so that they could help him better.

That's why I have such a heart for foster children. That's why I've made taking care of foster kids such a big priority as governor. That experience taught me an important lesson: what these kids are facing isn't their fault. Their challenges and traumas are very real.

In South Dakota, we help our neighbors. And when kids and families in our community are struggling, we help them, too. That's why we launched our "Stronger Families Together" initiative.

"Stronger Families Together" seeks to increase the number of foster parents serving kids in South Dakota. Last year, we set a 5-year high of 238 new foster families in our state. And that's great news! But we need more. Our goal is to get 300 new families involved in foster care each year over the next 4 years.

We want to increase the number of available foster families so that we don't have waiting lists for kids waiting to get into a foster home. Instead, we should have waiting lists of parents waiting to bring in a foster child. Every child deserves a safe and loving home. And with "Stronger Families Together," we'll help to give them just such a home.

But we need you. Ask yourself and your family if you feel called to serve as a foster family.

Even if you don't feel that call, we still need you. Foster families need a support structure. They need their community to help them while they're helping these kids. So ask yourself, what can I give? Maybe it's a donation. Maybe it's lifting these families up in prayer. If you're a business owner, maybe it's giving discounts to foster families. However you can help, we need you.

More importantly, these kids need you. And their families need you, too. The point of foster care is to give families time to heal; to give kids a safe and loving environment while their parents put whatever hurt or challenge they're facing behind them. Sometimes the healing process doesn't work out, and those kids need to be adopted. In those instances, they need you all the more.

South Dakota is a strong state. Over the past year, I've come to believe like never before that we're the strongest state in America. But we can always be stronger. Together, we can give families an opportunity to heal. And together, we can build stronger families across our state by helping out even more kids. Stronger families will lead to stronger communities. And stronger communities will help us build an even stronger South Dakota.

Medicare has changed. Find out how it can affect you.

Important changes to the federal Medicare program became effective at the beginning of the year. As a result, retirees in your state may be eligible for coverage with new options.

Find out if you qualify for Medicare Supplement insurance that can help limit your out-of-pocket expenses.

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Get the facts that matter to you:

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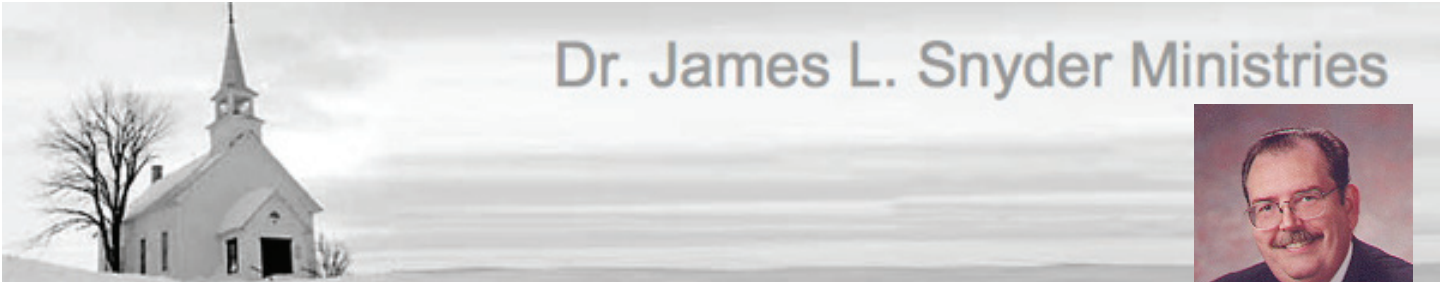
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I May Be a Knucklehead, but I'm Not Insane

Nobody is perfect except maybe the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage comes close. I've never caught her in some imperfection, or if I had, nobody would know it from me.

There is such an obsession today for people to be perfect. And, of course, their definition of perfect is what they are. They judge everybody by themselves, which is insane in itself.

Often my wife will catch me in something and say, "Are you acting like a knucklehead?"

If only she knew I wasn't acting. The simple fact is, I don't know everything I'm supposed to know. I don't know what I'm not supposed to know. It gets rather confusing after a while, and it slips over into the area of knuckleheadhood.

When it comes to fixing things, I am the classic knucklehead. If something is broken, I can make it more broken in just a few minutes.

If the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sees something broken, she can fix it in the twinkling of an eye. I married her because of that twinkle in her eye. At the time I didn't know what it really meant.

On occasion, I've been with her when she took her van to the repair shop. It is the most delightful experience I could ever have.

When the repair person sees my wife coming in, he thinks she is just a woman. Boy, is he in for a surprise.

She takes the repair person to her vehicle and explains, in detail, what is wrong with the vehicle and how to fix it.

She will say to him, "I can fix it; I just don't have the time today."

He will look at her; rubbing his chin as he looks at me. Then he will explain to my wife what needs to be done and how he's going to do it.

Wrong step.

Again, she will tell him exactly what's wrong and exactly what he needs to do to fix it. Then she will say, "If it's not fixed the way I tell you, I am not going to pay for it."

Fortunately, for him, he fixes it precisely the way she wants it. Another life saved.

Where she got all that knowledge about a vehicle, I do not know. I never question; I always go along. After all, she has saved me a lot of money by fixing things herself.

One time there was something wrong with our air conditioning, and the repairman came to fix it. Again, she told him exactly what was wrong with it.

Then she walked away. In a few moments, he came back and said, "I'm going to have to go to my garage and get a tool I need to fix this."

She looked at him and said, "What tool do you need?"

"Oh, you would not know what it is. It's something special for my work."

"Tell me what it is; maybe I have it."

He laughed a hearty chuckle and then told her the tool he needs.

"I have that tool. Let me go to my garage and get it and bring it to you, and you won't have to leave; you can fix it right away."

He looked at her, rubbed his chin, looked at me, and then took the tool she brought to him. He walked to where he was doing his repair work, shaking his head every step of the way.

When it comes to work like this, I am a professional knucklehead for sure. I wouldn't know one tool

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from another, which can get me into trouble.

We are closing in on the 50th anniversary of our wedding. I have yet to find something she can't fix. And believe me, I have broken a lot of things throughout our life.

One time, the front bumper on my truck was broken and sagging. I told my wife that I would take it to the repair shop to get it fixed.

"No," she said as she walked back into the house, "let me fix it for you."

Well, in a few minutes, she came out with several very large paperclips, and in a few moments, she had the bumper clipped to the truck.

"There," she said, "it's fixed; you don't have to take it to the repair shop."

I left very heartily, knowing that the paperclips did not fix the problem, but I did not want to tell her in front of her. I thought I would play out the game until the paperclips fell off.

That was three years ago, and they're still in place.

I still don't know how that works. But, as a knucklehead, I'm not going to pursue it and end up in a swamp of insanity. If it works, it works.

The other week I tripped and fell and thankfully did not break any bones. My fear is if I break my arm, she will want to fix it right away. I'm not saying she can't fix it, but I don't want to go there.

Perhaps this is why our marriage is so good. She has fixed everything that was broken, and I think she has done most of them behind my back.

As I thought of this, I was reminded of one of my favorite Bible verses. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

To "walk together in agreement" is probably the most wonderful thing about a marriage.

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Frenzied housing market putting homeownership out of reach for some South Dakotans

Danielle Ferguson
South Dakota News Watch

Historically low interest rates, a rush of out-of-state homebuyers, limited inventory and higher construction prices for new homes have made for a frenzied housing market that has put homeownership further out of reach for some South Dakota residents.

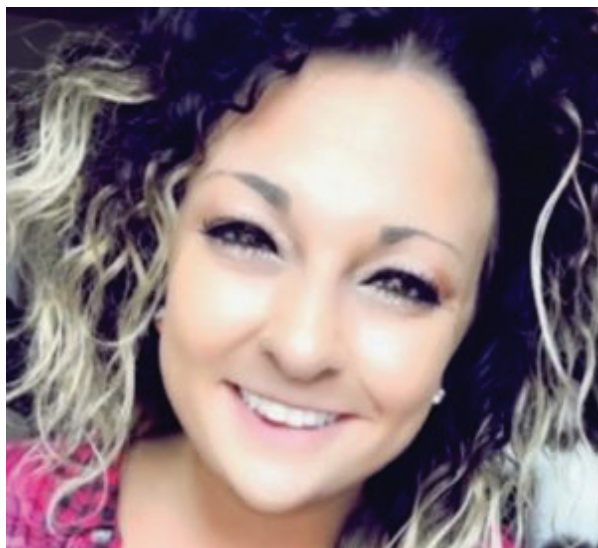
The highly competitive housing market is leading to a range of outcomes often seen in coastal states but rarely in South Dakota.

First-time homebuyers or those looking for properties at an affordable price have found themselves in bidding wars with others willing to pay \$20,000 to \$60,000 above list price. Offer prices are being driven up by high demand from out-of-state residents moving to South Dakota for work, the lifestyle or because they approve of how the state operated during the pandemic. Everyone is competing for a smaller pool of homes on the market, and some South Dakota homes are selling in less than two days.

"I've been in real estate for 33 years and I've never seen it like this," said state Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, who is a real-estate agent. "A lot of people want to move here."

The frenzied market is pushing up home prices and making it more difficult for low- to medium-income residents to achieve homeownership. The \$45,000 average yearly income in South Dakota cannot compete with the purchasing power of a six-figure, out-of-state salary. Those longtime residents who normally would be able to purchase a home are forced to remain in rental properties, further putting a limit to the available rental units for families in need of affordable housing.

"All of this demand doesn't seem to be able to be fed with home purchases, so it's going to the rental market," said Bryan Achbach, director of the Pennington County Housing and Redevelopment Commission.



Eilish O'Toole

Many of the major complexes the coalition uses in Rapid City are at 100% capacity with waiting lists, which is not normal, Achbach said. The commission's clientele has had trouble finding units to rent and existing renters are seeing rents rise rapidly, Achbach said.

"Families are being put in a really tough spot for circumstances that are really out of their control," he said.

The strong seller's market is putting an emotional strain on potential buyers, especially those trying to achieve home ownership for the first time and obtain the financial stability and investment equity that come with owning a home.

Eilish O'Toole of Sioux Falls thought 2021 was the right year for her to buy a home.

Her rent was becoming high enough to equal a mortgage payment and O'Toole, who works for Lutheran Social Services and helps former inmates transition back to society, wanted a yard for her son to play in.

O'Toole, 25, got pre-approved for a low-interest FHA loan in

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January and initially started looking for a home on the west side of Sioux Falls. She expanded her search into downtown and eventually into eastern Sioux Falls as houses in her price range of around \$200,000 were quickly snatched off the market.

The first house she looked at was put under contract by another buyer just as O'Toole pulled in the driveway for a tour. Her agent then texted her at 8 p.m. to alert her of a showing for another house. When O'Toole arrived, 30 other people were walking through the property, one of the few homes left in her price range. O'Toole put in bids well over asking price on four houses but was out-bid each time.

O'Toole eventually gave up the search and signed a lease in a new apartment. She didn't want to stay in her current apartment, where rent was increasing by 18% and beginning to charge separately for utilities. The new apartment wasn't easy to find either, she said.

"I think everybody must be moving to Sioux Falls," she said. "Apartments were [renting] before I could pick up an application."

Housing availability and affordability are concerns in every South Dakota county, said Rep. Chase, who will chair a legislative summer study to identify how the state can help communities strengthen their local housing market. The first meeting for the group is scheduled for June 9 in Pierre. Other meetings will likely be held on the western and eastern sides of the state, Chase said.

"Lack of housing is what's keeping South Dakota from growing more quickly," Chase said.

An urban and rural issue in S.D. and U.S.

The seller's market among real estate in South Dakota is part of a nationwide trend.

Available housing inventory in the U.S. hit a record low 1.03 million units at the end of February, according to the National Association of Realtors. The number of homes on the market in March was 52% lower than in March 2020, according to realtor.com. The growth of online home sales has helped speed up the purchasing process. What used to be a national average of a 60-day sale is now down to 20 days.

Amid the frenzy in the Rushmore State, sellers who are fielding numerous offers are also having trouble finding a new house to move into; some are holding onto their property until they can build, compounding the decline of inventory.

"We're hearing some sellers say, 'That's great, I could sell my place, put that equity to work for myself, but where would I go?'" said Darla Abels-Ling of Keller Williams Realty in Sioux Falls.

The tight housing market is forcing some South Dakotans to make difficult or somewhat drastic decisions in order to afford a home.

First-time buyers Miranda Dingus and her husband competed against 22 other offers on a home. Before they bid on one home, 66 other people had already toured the property.

Macy Trautner, 24, and her boyfriend, Adam Christensen, were looking to move out of metro Sioux Falls, but homes in the surrounding towns were selling too fast and too far out of their price range. One house the couple toured in Harrisburg had sold the day after it went on the market for \$30,000 over the asking price.

Another home they were interested in started receiving bids in the first hour of an open house. The first-time homebuyers ended up purchasing a home that had been damaged in the 2019 floods and hope to take occupancy in June once repairs are completed.



In this video, real-estate agent Beth Meyer of 605 Real Estate in Sioux Falls discusses the "pretty crazy" housing market in eastern South Dakota in which some buyers are offering up to \$60,000 over asking price for available homes.

Photo/video: Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

Beth Meyer of 605 Real Estate warns her clients they may have to act fast and put in multiple bids before getting a contract. In the first weekend in May, she had 40 people look at a \$260,000 home. This time

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last year, she considered an open house successful if it attracted six potential buyers.

"It's been a skill to get our buyers through this emotional roller coaster," Meyer said.

Real-estate agents are far busier than normal and benefiting financially from the hectic market.

Lynn Morris tells her Watertown-area realty team to answer their phones as often as possible.

Morris used to instinctively ignore most calls from out of state because she suspected they were spam. Now, she picks up every call because the person on the other end is probably looking to buy a home in South Dakota.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit last spring, Morris was initially worried that business would slow or come to a halt. She jokingly describes that period as the "five-minute pause" before people from out of state started coming to South Dakota because they were attracted to how the government implemented few restrictions during the pandemic.

She estimates her out-of-state client base has increased by 80% over the last year.

"We've had so many people coming from out of state," Morris said. "We went from a 'pandemic pause' to now our phones are ringing off the hook with out-of-state buyers. We have an inventory shortage. For the first time, things are selling over list price."

Cathy Evans, Executive Director for Lemmon Housing and Redevelopment Commission, said the majority of those purchasing homes in Lemmon are from around the area.

Lemmon, population 1,200, straddles the border of North Dakota and South Dakota and is also seeing strong interest from out-of-state homebuyers.

Evans said she recently received an out-of-the-blue call from a California resident looking to purchase a home to move to Lemmon next year.

"In the past year, I've gotten lots and lots of phone calls from people needing housing," she said. "If I have a house come open, people know about it in five minutes."

The housing commission is getting creative in finding ways to convert existing structures into housing opportunities.

Last year, Evans found that Lemmon had 100 vacant houses. She is leading an effort to purchase those homes and fix them up. The commission also purchased a beauty shop that was vacant for 10 years and is turning it into a duplex.

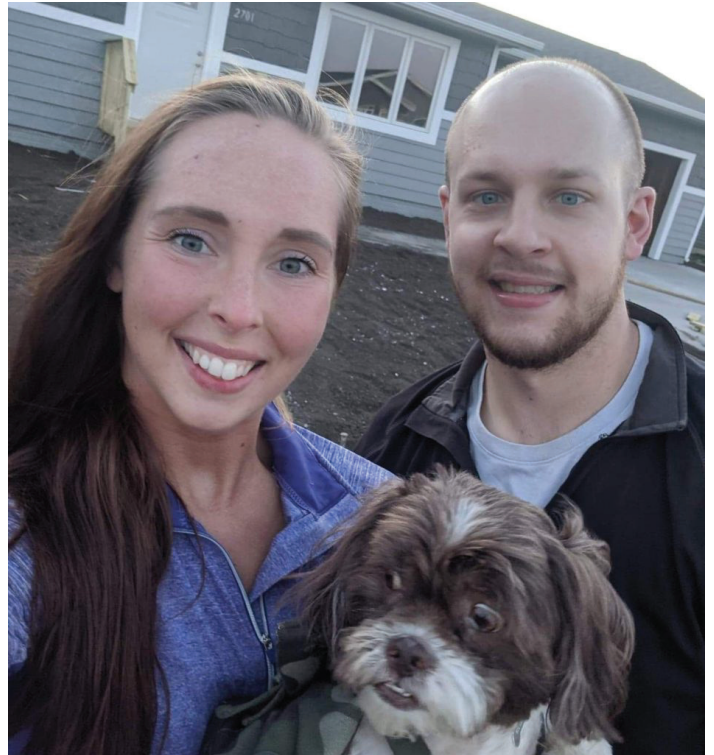
"There are people wanting to move here, but there's no housing for them to move into," she said.

High construction prices further tighten market

Some sellers are using the extra cash they get for their homes to construct a new home, a prospect that is costly due to high prices for construction materials.

Those trying to build are seeing anywhere from an 18% to 80% hike in material costs, especially in lumber, because of production shutdowns during the pandemic. On the national level, the price of lumber reached an all-time high of \$1,359 per thousand board feet, according to Fortune Magazine.

Last year, lumber for a house would cost Sioux Falls area builder Mike Schlapkohl about \$30,000 on



Macy Trautman and her boyfriend, Adam Christensen, and their dog Baxter were able to purchase a house in Sioux Falls after being outbid on three different houses. Photo: Courtesy

of Macy Trautman

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This 4-bedroom, 2-bath home on North Haines Avenue in Rapid City, located in a modest neighborhood north of downtown, was under contract for purchase in May for \$204,900. The 1,784 square-foot property sold for \$84,000 in 2008 and \$104,000 in 2018, according to county records. Photo: Bart

Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

average. This year, prices are averaging more than \$52,000, a 73% increase. Other construction material prices are also rising, especially those manufactured in parts of the country that shut down for longer periods of time during the pandemic, such as California. A lot of resin used to make PVC and OSB pipes is brought in from Texas, where a February deep freeze halted manufacturing.

"The mills shut down and were not producing material, but the demand stayed the same or went up," Schlapkohl said.

Schlapkohl, who has been a builder in the area for about eight years, said the spike in lumber prices hasn't deterred people who want to build.

"Everyone I'm working with just sold their house for \$60,000 to \$80,000 more than they would have normally, so they're not too concerned about higher cost in lumber," he said.

In February, there were building permits authorized for 1.68 million privately owned new housing units across the country, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 17% above February 2020.

Costs for materials to build homes in the Governor's House Program have gone up about 19%, said Lori

Moen, chief operating officer for Grow South Dakota. Governor's houses are affordable homes built at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield for low- to medium-income families.

The income levels of some new entrants into the homebuying population have also made it harder for low- to medium-income people to afford a home, said Nacasius Ujah, a finance professor at South Dakota State University. More millennials with more spending power are entering the housing market, further driving up prices and reducing inventory of moderately priced homes, he said.

The average cost of a home has also increased over the past decade. According to Zillow, a single family home in South Dakota on average cost about \$161,000 in 2012; this year the average is \$253,000.

The increase in materials cost, demand for housing and increase in house prices have reduced affordable housing options, especially in rural communities, Moen said.

"In our rural communities, the housing stock is short to begin with," she said. "Families who live in those communities are finding it difficult to find housing they can afford and that's suitable for them."

More buyers seek finance assistance

The need for financing help increased during the pandemic among medium-income working families who did not qualify for purchasing assistance, Moen said.

In 2020, Grow South Dakota helped 649 people across 250 households receive emergency financial assistance, food and utilities. In 2019, the statewide nonprofit provided emergency financial assistance to 500 people in 185 households. Grow South Dakota helped another 276 individuals in 175 households under the South Dakota Housing Development Authority CARES Act Emergency funds.

"The need is definitely there," Moen said. "A lot of people are thinking they can do it one more month and coming in when it's more of a challenge to meet that mortgage payment."

Most down-payment and closing cost assistance programs are focused on people who meet 80% of the median area income or less, a United States Department of Housing and Urban Development guideline. Families that make just over that amount still may not be able to afford the down payment or closing cost for a house, but don't qualify for assistance.

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Grow South Dakota offers a financing gap-assistance program for families who make between 80% and 115% of the median area income. That money was used quicker than usual this year, Moen said.

"That's our workforce," Moen said. "We need to give them opportunities for generational wealth."

Across the state, real-estate agents are bracing for a continued high demand for housing and further price increases.

Sioux Falls area agents expect the northern part of town and surrounding towns to explode with the upcoming building of an Amazon fulfillment center, scheduled to be finished in 2022 and create about 1,000 full-time jobs. The Seattle-based company recently opened a 60,000 square-foot delivery warehouse on the northeastern side of town, separate from the fulfillment center.

Local real-estate agents expect the market to stay hot at least throughout the rest of the year. Their advice to prospective buyers is to get pre-approved for loans and brace for an emotional bidding war or the prospect they may need to keep renting.

"We're having a hard time finding houses for our current buyers," said Meyer, of 605 Real Estate in Sioux Falls. "We're going to get an influx of amazing employment but where are we going to house these people?"

The pandemic pushed more Native American families to consider home ownership.

During the first six months of 2020, 193 people enrolled in classes for first-time homebuyers and financial literacy offered by reservation-based community development groups compared to 190 people in all of 2019, according to the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition.

Lenders closed 40 home loans with Native American buyers in the first half of 2020, compared to 47 loans in all of 2019, according to the coalition.

Numbers for the rest of 2020 aren't yet available, said Tawney Brunsch, executive director of the coalition. The coalition is surveying last year's loan and mortgage activities. Brunsch said she expects the number of home improvement loans and mortgages to continue to increase.

"We believe that [increase] is from the pandemic making us acutely aware of the need to provide more space in a home," she said this week.

Multiple generations often live in one household, which is common on South Dakota reservations in part because there is a severe shortage of available housing.

"There's not a lot of homeless population on South Dakota reservations because we tend to take our family members in," Brunsch said. "That results in severe need for repair and renovation."

According to a 2019 housing study on the Standing Sioux Rock Reservation, 95% of those living on the reservation said it was a challenge to find affordable, quality housing on the reservation. Almost 12% of all occupied housing units and 16.5% of renter-occupied units there are overcrowded. To meet growing housing needs over the next 15 years, a minimum of 458 additional will either need to be built or rehabilitated, according to the study.

Reservation communities often don't have local real-estate agents or home sale websites. Building on reservations is expensive, Brunsch said. The remote locations put people farther from contractors and building materials. The price spike in materials has made building on reservations even more expensive, she said.

Despite those hurdles, Brunsch said the interest in homeownership is still increasing. Brunsch, who is



The home for sale in northern Sioux Falls was priced at \$470,000 in early May. Open houses for homes in the \$200,000 price range have drawn dozens of potential buyers amid a seller's market with low inventory. Photo: Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

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Real-estate agents Beth and Jeff Meyer show potential buyers a home in northern Sioux Falls during an open house on May 8.

Photo: Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

also chair of the Lakota Federal Credit Union in Pine Ridge, said a pipeline of potential borrowers for the credit union's home improvement loans and mortgage programs is growing.

"I expect there to be big increases of borrowers who are super interested in finally taking the plunge of becoming homeowners," she said.

HOMEOWNERSHIP INTEREST INCREASING IN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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Danielle Ferguson, Sioux Falls, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. She grew up in Salem, S.D. and previously worked as a watchdog reporter at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

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EARTHTALK ™

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Cicada Blooms Off Kilter Due To Global Warming
by Roddy Scheer and Doug Moss



Dear EarthTalk: Are the cicada blooms of the eastern U.S. out of whack due to global warming and/or other man-made environmental problems?

—Joe R., Moorestown, NJ

The short answer is...probably. If you live in the eastern or midwestern U.S., you've likely seen so-called periodic cicadas. These inch-long, gray- and orange-winged insects with bulging red eyes feed on the underground xylem tissue of tree roots for years before emerging in millions-strong-per-acre swarms to mate and then die. Of the 3,000 different cicada species around the world, only seven—all in North America—are periodical. The first historical reports of periodical cicadas came from the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock and were shocked to see such a wondrous biological phenomenon unfold before their eyes during the summer of 1634.

Cut to the present, summer 2021 promises to be a doozy as cicada "blooms" go. From Georgia and Tennessee north to Michigan and New York, we can expect to see a big showing as the largest generational brood, Brood X, emerges from the ground en masse as spring warms to summer.

But even though this spectacle typically starts in May, this year millions of cicadas came out as early as March. Researchers believe they were erroneously triggered by a warming-induced "false spring" when the weather warmed up enough for trees to start leafing out early, even though at least one more freeze was still on the way. Even stranger still, a smaller segment of Brood X actually emerged four years early in and around Washington, D.C. in the late spring of 2017.

"[For] these accelerations that we're seeing constantly for all these different broods over much of the eastern half of the U.S., the only common phenomenon that can account for it is climate," biologist Gene Kritsky of Ohio's Mount St. Joseph University, who has been studying and mapping periodical cicadas for decades, tells Scientific American.

Time will tell if this warming-induced aberration in the cicada's lifecycle will have deleterious effects on the environment. The Pilgrims may have mistakenly thought they were being swarmed by a plague of locusts of biblical proportions that would eat up all their crops, but cicadas are actually beneficial to the environment, providing valuable ecosystem services to the communities of plants and wildlife in their native territories. Once the cicadas do emerge, they aerate soils, serve as a food source for predators, and relieve predatory pressure on other insects, serving as a biological kickstart to local ecosystems.

Scientists studying the ecological role of cicadas worry that altering the timing of their emergence could potentially have negative effects on the bug's populations moving forward, not to mention other environmental ripple effects. In the meantime, consider yourself lucky if you do get to see the cicadas—indeed one of the great phenomena of nature of the eastern U.S.—during this summer of Brood X.

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| County | Total Cases | Recovered Cases | Negative Persons | Deceased Among Cases | Community Spread | % PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly) |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aurora | 473 | 457 | 950 | 15 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Beadle | 2956 | 2906 | 6544 | 40 | Moderate | 9.7% |
| Bennett | 391 | 381 | 1256 | 9 | Minimal | 6.3% |
| Bon Homme | 1548 | 1517 | 2314 | 27 | Minimal | 1.9% |
| Brookings | 4212 | 4151 | 13745 | 37 | Moderate | 1.7% |
| Brown | 5581 | 5431 | 14020 | 92 | Substantial | 6.8% |
| Brule | 717 | 701 | 2064 | 10 | Moderate | 3.1% |
| Buffalo | 426 | 412 | 925 | 13 | None | 0.0% |
| Butte | 1060 | 1024 | 3565 | 20 | Moderate | 12.9% |
| Campbell | 130 | 126 | 282 | 4 | None | 0.0% |
| Charles Mix | 1378 | 1350 | 4373 | 22 | Minimal | 2.6% |
| Clark | 461 | 450 | 1051 | 5 | Moderate | 13.0% |
| Clay | 1921 | 1901 | 6027 | 15 | Minimal | 0.8% |
| Codington | 4639 | 4514 | 10773 | 81 | Substantial | 11.6% |
| Corson | 480 | 467 | 1129 | 12 | Minimal | 2.4% |
| Custer | 860 | 820 | 2955 | 12 | Substantial | 19.7% |
| Davison | 3232 | 3152 | 7429 | 66 | Moderate | 3.3% |
| Day | 708 | 675 | 1976 | 29 | Minimal | 4.5% |
| Deuel | 527 | 516 | 1310 | 9 | Minimal | 5.0% |
| Dewey | 1474 | 1442 | 4118 | 28 | Moderate | 1.6% |
| Douglas | 455 | 445 | 1025 | 9 | Minimal | 5.9% |
| Edmunds | 513 | 497 | 1163 | 14 | Minimal | 4.5% |
| Fall River | 596 | 576 | 2918 | 16 | Minimal | 4.2% |
| Faulk | 371 | 357 | 755 | 13 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Grant | 1051 | 995 | 2494 | 42 | Moderate | 16.0% |
| Gregory | 579 | 548 | 1421 | 30 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Haakon | 263 | 253 | 583 | 10 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Hamlin | 797 | 754 | 2018 | 39 | Minimal | 2.7% |
| Hand | 362 | 356 | 938 | 6 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Hanson | 388 | 381 | 799 | 4 | Minimal | 6.7% |
| Harding | 97 | 95 | 206 | 1 | Minimal | 16.7% |
| Hughes | 2499 | 2441 | 7396 | 39 | Moderate | 1.7% |
| Hutchinson | 917 | 880 | 2676 | 27 | Moderate | 3.6% |

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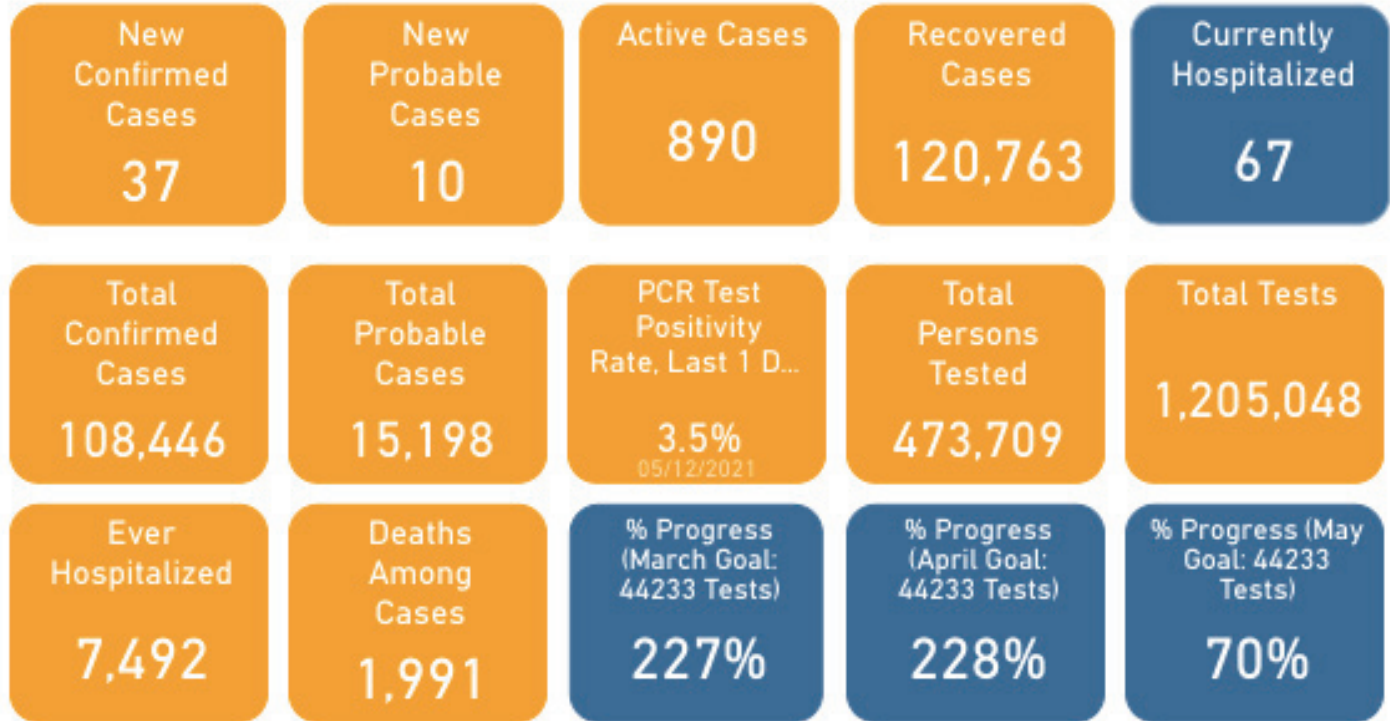
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| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------------|-------|
| Hyde | 141 | 140 | 462 | 1 | None | 0.0% |
| Jackson | 289 | 275 | 977 | 14 | None | 0.0% |
| Jerauld | 277 | 259 | 609 | 16 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Jones | 93 | 93 | 262 | 0 | None | 0.0% |
| Kingsbury | 818 | 796 | 1883 | 18 | Moderate | 12.5% |
| Lake | 1370 | 1343 | 3843 | 20 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Lawrence | 2987 | 2915 | 9093 | 47 | Moderate | 5.6% |
| Lincoln | 8687 | 8547 | 22825 | 77 | Moderate | 6.6% |
| Lyman | 653 | 637 | 2049 | 11 | Moderate | 2.8% |
| Marshall | 372 | 363 | 1360 | 6 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| McCook | 807 | 780 | 1872 | 25 | Minimal | 3.6% |
| McPherson | 246 | 240 | 623 | 4 | Minimal | 22.2% |
| Meade | 2770 | 2717 | 8439 | 31 | Moderate | 4.2% |
| Mellette | 261 | 258 | 814 | 2 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Miner | 304 | 291 | 644 | 10 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Minnehaha | 31602 | 30998 | 88872 | 358 | Substantial | 6.0% |
| Moody | 664 | 633 | 1945 | 18 | Moderate | 11.1% |
| Oglala Lakota | 2111 | 2060 | 7198 | 49 | Minimal | 0.5% |
| Pennington | 13755 | 13420 | 42956 | 194 | Moderate | 8.5% |
| Perkins | 359 | 342 | 872 | 14 | Minimal | 14.3% |
| Potter | 390 | 386 | 922 | 4 | None | 0.0% |
| Roberts | 1365 | 1319 | 4599 | 39 | Minimal | 4.6% |
| Sanborn | 344 | 339 | 762 | 3 | Minimal | 12.5% |
| Spink | 843 | 815 | 2307 | 26 | Minimal | 5.3% |
| Stanley | 350 | 344 | 1075 | 2 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Sully | 142 | 138 | 343 | 3 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Todd | 1228 | 1193 | 4484 | 30 | Minimal | 0.9% |
| Tripp | 755 | 738 | 1632 | 17 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Turner | 1173 | 1113 | 3010 | 56 | Moderate | 4.2% |
| Union | 2222 | 2170 | 7023 | 43 | Moderate | 3.1% |
| Walworth | 767 | 750 | 1966 | 15 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Yankton | 3093 | 3045 | 10405 | 33 | Moderate | 2.3% |
| Ziebach | 344 | 335 | 939 | 9 | Minimal | 0.0% |
| Unassigned | 0 | 0 | 1802 | 0 | | |

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Age Range with Years | # of Cases | # of Deaths Among Cases |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| 0-9 years | 5388 | 0 |
| 10-19 years | 14604 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 21839 | 8 |
| 30-39 years | 20420 | 20 |
| 40-49 years | 17684 | 41 |
| 50-59 years | 17268 | 118 |
| 60-69 years | 13945 | 273 |
| 70-79 years | 7263 | 458 |
| 80+ years | 5233 | 1073 |

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Race/Ethnicity | # of Cases | % of Cases |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| White | 92846 | 75% |
| Native American | 14221 | 12% |
| Unknown | 5607 | 5% |
| Hispanic | 4679 | 4% |
| Black | 2836 | 2% |
| Other | 1762 | 1% |
| Asian / Pacific Islander | 1693 | 1% |

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

| COVID-19 Variant | # of Cases |
|------------------|------------|
| B.1.1.7 | 121 |
| B.1.429 | 15 |
| P.1 | 3 |
| B.1.351 | 2 |
| B.1.427 | 1 |

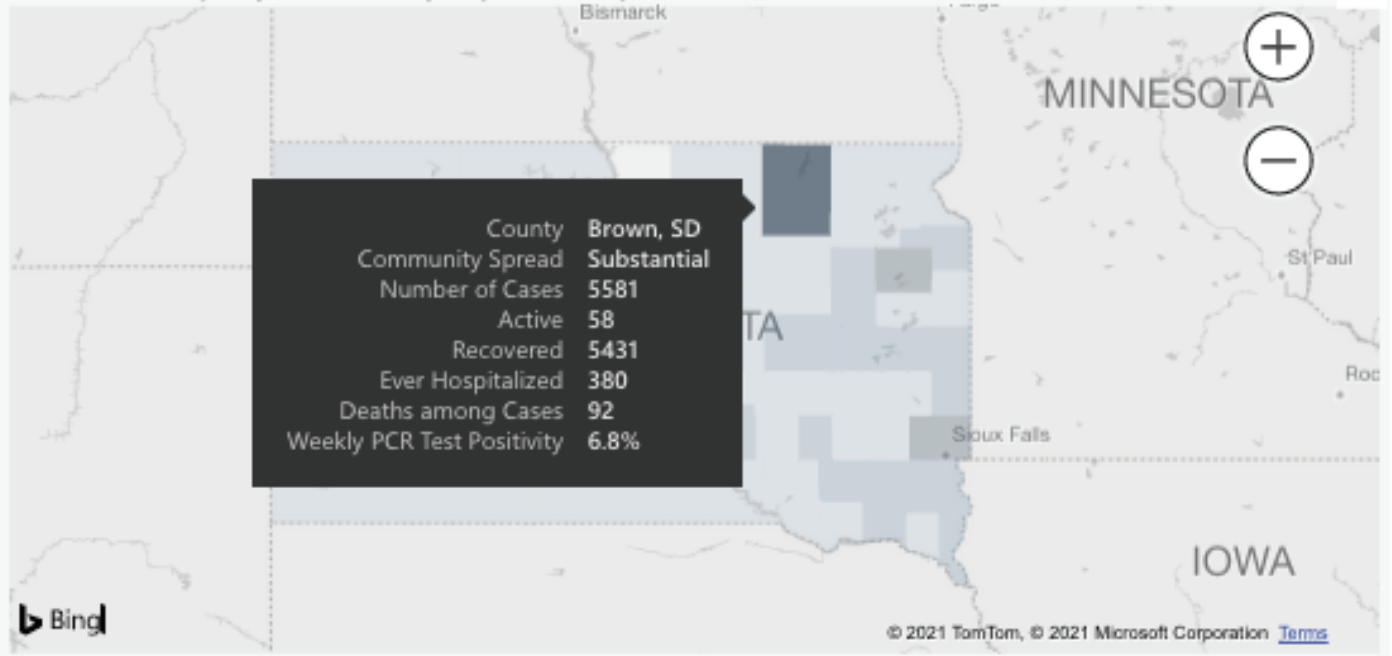
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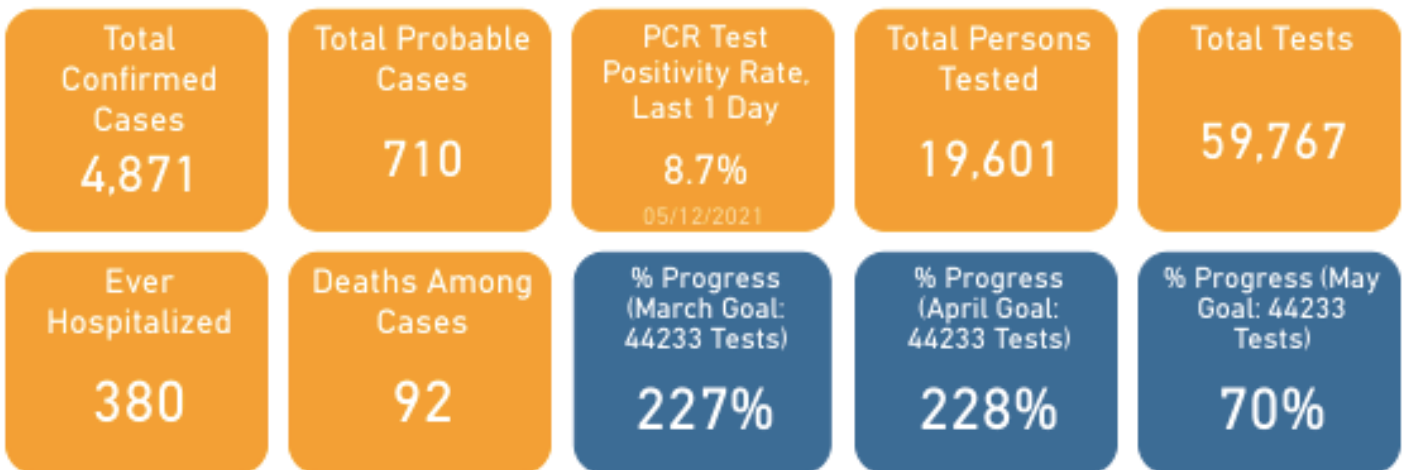
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



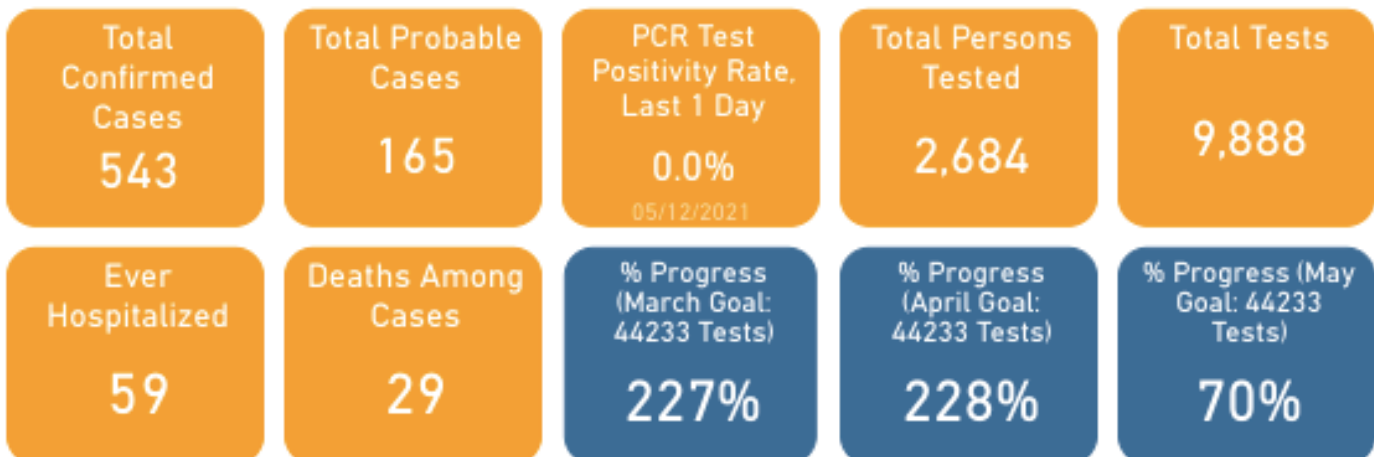
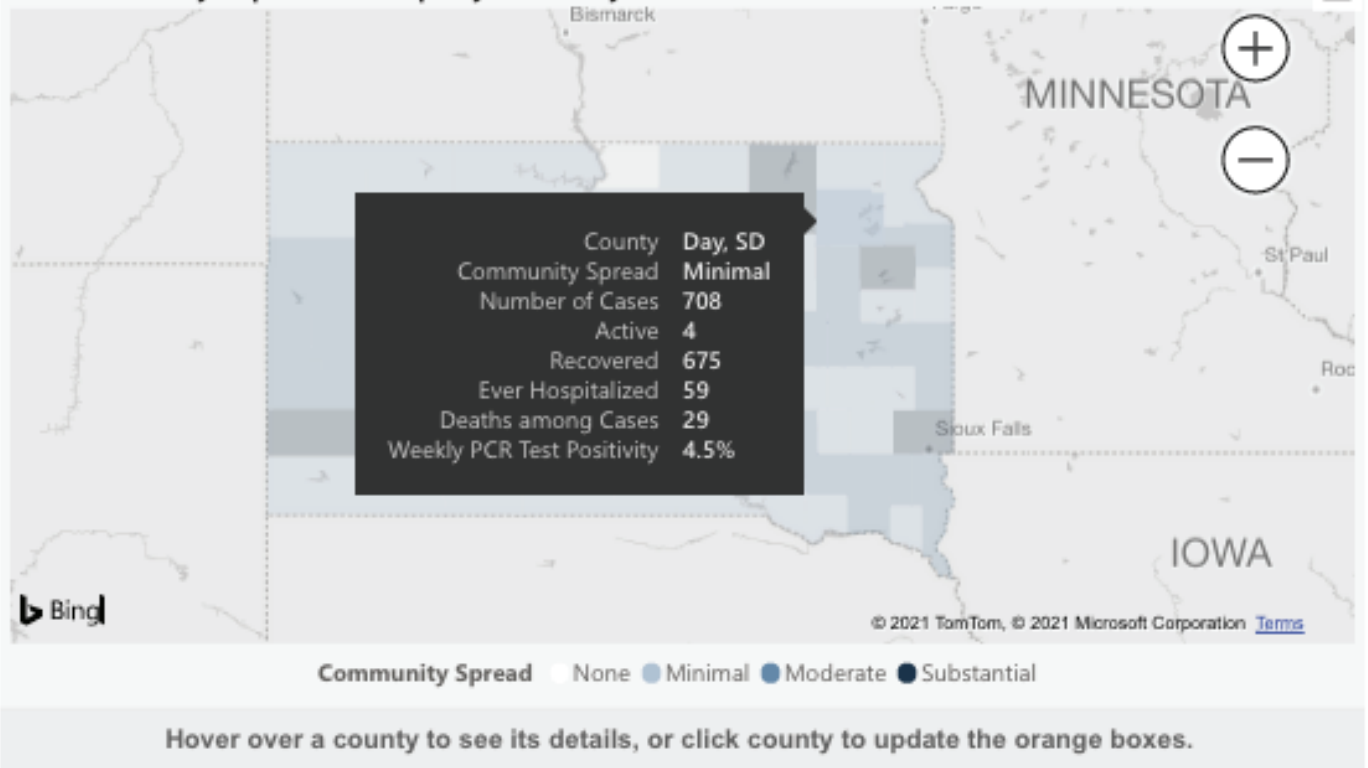
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Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered*

627,536

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine*

337,559

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

56%

| Manufacturer | # of Doses |
|--------------|------------|
| Janssen | 18,450 |
| Moderna | 278,117 |
| Pfizer | 330,969 |

| Doses | # of Recipients |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Janssen - Series Complete | 18,450 |
| Moderna - 1 dose | 15,363 |
| Moderna - Series Complete | 131,377 |
| Pfizer - 1 dose | 13,785 |
| Pfizer - Series Complete | 158,592 |

| Doses | % of Pop. |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1 dose | 56.13% |
| Series Complete | 50.66% |

Based on 2019 Census Estimate for those aged 16+ years.

| County | # Doses | # Persons (1 dose) | # Persons (2 doses) | Total # Persons |
|--------------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Aurora | 2,030 | 124 | 953 | 1,077 |
| Beadle | 13,107 | 1,030 | 6,038 | 7,068 |
| Bennett* | 753 | 109 | 322 | 431 |
| Bon Homme* | 5,885 | 257 | 2,814 | 3,071 |
| Brookings | 24,579 | 2,843 | 10,868 | 13,711 |
| Brown | 30,887 | 1,651 | 14,618 | 16,269 |
| Brule* | 2,968 | 298 | 1,335 | 1,633 |
| Buffalo* | 192 | 78 | 57 | 135 |
| Butte | 4,542 | 570 | 1,986 | 2,556 |
| Campbell | 1,628 | 110 | 759 | 869 |
| Charles Mix* | 5,380 | 600 | 2,390 | 2,990 |
| Clark | 2,602 | 418 | 1,092 | 1,510 |
| Clay | 10,887 | 1,167 | 4,860 | 6,027 |
| Codington* | 20,885 | 1,595 | 9,645 | 11,240 |
| Corson* | 468 | 48 | 210 | 258 |
| Custer* | 5,457 | 637 | 2,410 | 3,047 |
| Davison | 16,320 | 1,008 | 7,656 | 8,664 |
| Day* | 4,744 | 360 | 2,192 | 2,552 |
| Deuel | 2,896 | 268 | 1,314 | 1,582 |
| Dewey* | 528 | 70 | 229 | 299 |
| Douglas* | 2,151 | 113 | 1,019 | 1,132 |
| Edmunds | 2,653 | 141 | 1,256 | 1,397 |
| Fall River* | 4,522 | 350 | 2,086 | 2,436 |
| Faulk | 1,945 | 79 | 933 | 1,012 |
| Grant* | 5,581 | 303 | 2,639 | 2,942 |
| Gregory* | 2,924 | 176 | 1,374 | 1,550 |

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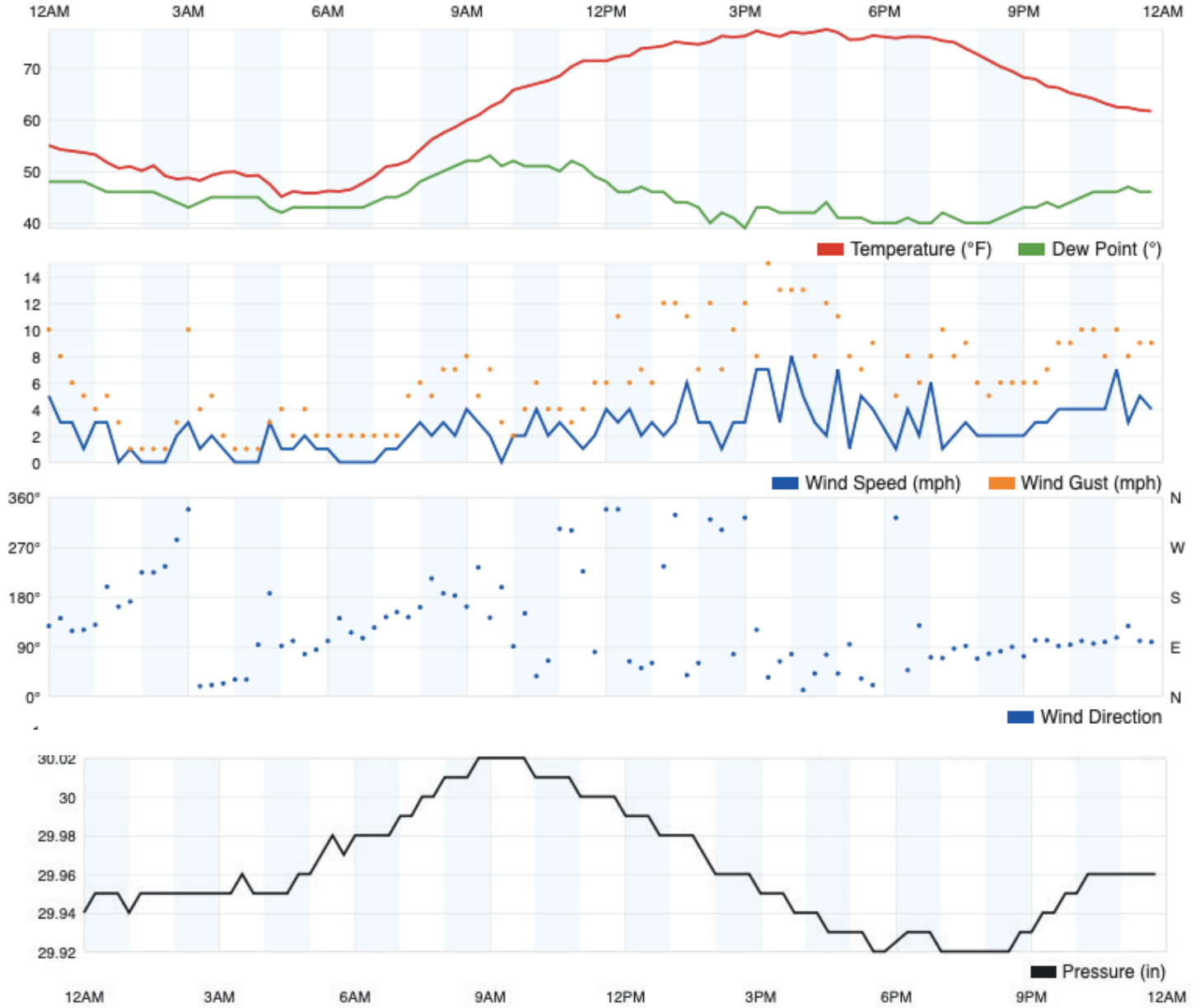
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| | | | | |
|----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Haakon* | 872 | 50 | 411 | 461 |
| Hamlin | 3,605 | 425 | 1,590 | 2,015 |
| Hand | 2,703 | 95 | 1,304 | 1,399 |
| Hanson | 1,153 | 77 | 538 | 615 |
| Harding | 278 | 38 | 120 | 158 |
| Hughes* | 16,092 | 758 | 7,667 | 8,425 |
| Hutchinson* | 6,635 | 302 | 3,166 | 3,468 |
| Hyde* | 902 | 42 | 430 | 472 |
| Jackson* | 677 | 55 | 311 | 366 |
| Jerauld | 1,607 | 73 | 767 | 840 |
| Jones* | 1,091 | 51 | 520 | 571 |
| Kingsbury | 4,855 | 371 | 2,242 | 2,613 |
| Lake | 9,056 | 992 | 4,032 | 5,024 |
| Lawrence | 17,015 | 1,609 | 7,703 | 9,312 |
| Lincoln | 50,460 | 2,599 | 23,930 | 26,529 |
| Lyman* | 1,470 | 180 | 645 | 825 |
| Marshall* | 3,722 | 242 | 1,740 | 1,982 |
| McCook | 4,162 | 488 | 1,837 | 2,325 |
| McPherson | 520 | 40 | 240 | 280 |
| Meade* | 12,251 | 1,137 | 5,557 | 6,694 |
| Mellette* | 84 | 2 | 41 | 43 |
| Miner | 1,584 | 244 | 670 | 914 |
| Minnehaha* | 165,497 | 10,714 | 77,389 | 88,103 |
| Moody* | 3,544 | 184 | 1,680 | 1,864 |
| Oglala Lakota* | 343 | 75 | 134 | 209 |
| Pennington* | 66,517 | 5,965 | 30,276 | 36,241 |
| Perkins* | 1,187 | 101 | 543 | 644 |
| Potter | 1,878 | 82 | 898 | 980 |
| Roberts* | 6,932 | 614 | 3,159 | 3,773 |
| Sanborn | 1,981 | 129 | 926 | 1,055 |
| Spink | 5,285 | 259 | 2,513 | 2,772 |
| Stanley* | 2,399 | 119 | 1,140 | 1,259 |
| Sully | 824 | 38 | 393 | 431 |
| Todd* | 290 | 46 | 122 | 168 |
| Tripp* | 3,307 | 195 | 1,556 | 1,751 |
| Turner | 6,262 | 392 | 2,935 | 3,327 |
| Union | 7,247 | 599 | 3,324 | 3,923 |
| Walworth* | 3,071 | 309 | 1,381 | 1,690 |
| Yankton | 19,807 | 981 | 9,413 | 10,394 |
| Ziebach* | 94 | 18 | 38 | 56 |
| Other | 13,763 | 2,497 | 5,633 | 8,130 |

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 78 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 47 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 80 °F

Monday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 54 °F

Tuesday



Partly Sunny
then Chance
Showers

High: 76 °F

Showers Today over southern South Dakota

Today, May 16th

Scattered rain showers and some rumbles of thunder, especially south of US Hwy 212. Mostly cloudy.

Highs 65-79°F

Tonight

Decreasing Clouds.

Lows 45-50°F

Monday

Gradually increasing clouds. Gusty southeast winds.

Highs 72-80°F

Completed 4:30AM CDT 5-16-2021 -- NWS Aberdeen SD

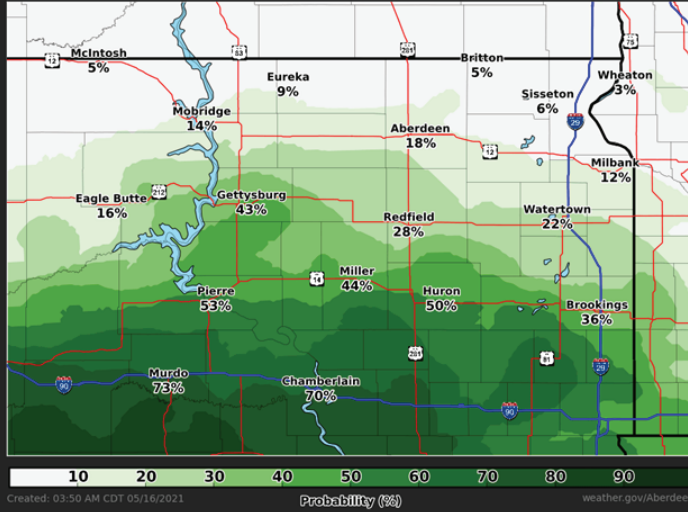
Showers and a few rumbles of thunder are expected today, especially from US Highway 212 and south. Expect decreasing clouds tonight and then dry conditions on Monday. Rain chances will return on Tuesday and be in place for the rest of the upcoming work week.

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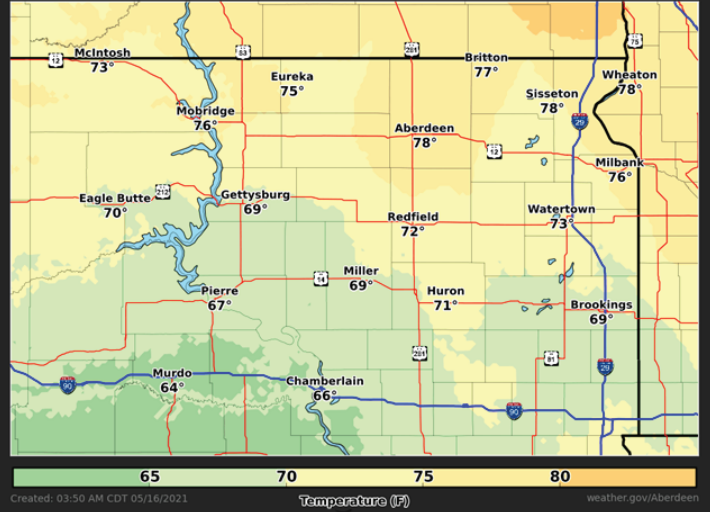
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Clouds and Rain Impacting Temperatures

Precipitation Chances Today



High Temperatures Today



Warmest temperatures today will be over the north, where clouds will be a little thinner and there's lower rain chances.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, South Dakota

Updated: 5/16/2021 5:09 AM Central

Showers and a few rumbles of thunder are expected today, especially from US Highway 212 and south. Expect decreasing clouds tonight and then dry conditions on Monday. Rain chances will return on Tuesday and be in place for the rest of the upcoming work week.

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Today in Weather History

May 16, 1883: Benchmark flooding in the Black Hills occurred in 1883, with extremely high flows reported throughout the hills that resulted from heavy rainfall on top of snowmelt. Click [HERE](#) for more images from USGS.

=May 16, 1929: On this day, Aberdeen recorded 3.0 inches of snow. This snowfall is the latest measurable snow for the city of Aberdeen on record.

May 16, 1992: It was a wild day across the tri-state region of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa, with tornadoes and destructive straight-line winds. A tornado damaged three-grain bins and two farm wagons in Cedar County of northeast Nebraska before crossing into Dixon County. As it traveled east, it destroyed two barns and a garage and was responsible for killing between 5,000 and 10,000 chickens at a chicken farm. In northwest Iowa, Sioux City reported winds of around 60 miles an hour causing some minor damage. Elsewhere, winds gusted as high as 75 miles an hour in Spencer and 74 miles an hour in Le Mars.

1874: The Mill Creek disaster occurred west of North Hampton, MA. Dam slippage resulted in a flash flood that claimed 143 lives and caused a million dollars property damage. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the New England Historical Society.

1983: An unyielding spring storm dumped heavy snow across the Front Range in Colorado. High winds of 20 to 40 mph with gusts to 55 mph produced blizzard conditions at times. The Foothills received 1 to 2 feet of snow with 4 to 12 inches along the Foothills. Blowing snow whipped the snow into drifts several feet deep closing schools and highways. Power outages occurred; with 20 square miles of Denver blacked out. Hundreds of passengers were stranded as only half of the runways were open at Stapleton International Airport. The high temperature at Denver the next day of just 40° set a record low maximum. Much of the snow melted on the 18th as temperatures rebounded into the middle and upper 50s causing widespread street flooding.

1989: Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in the south-central U.S. Thunderstorms spawned twenty tornadoes, and there were 180 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A tornado in Cleburne, Texas caused thirty million dollars damage. A violent F-4 tornado touched down near Brackettville, Texas and a strong F-3 tornado killed one person and injured 28 others at Jarrell, Texas.

1924 - The temperature at Blitzen OR soared to 108 degrees to set a state record for the month of May. The record was later tied at Pelton Dam on the 31st of May in 1986. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - High winds in the Wasatch Canyon of Utah struck Ogden and Brigham City. Winds at Hill Air Force Base gusted to 92 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - It was a summer-like day as thunderstorms abounded across the nation. Thunderstorms in Texas drenched Guadalupe County with more than three inches of rain resulting in flash flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from Florida to New York State. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Havre, MT, reported a record high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in the south central U.S. Thunderstorms spawned twenty tornadoes, and there were 180 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A tornado at Cleburne, TX, caused 30 million dollars damage. A violent (F-4) tornado touched down near Brackettville, TX, and a strong (F-3) tornado killed one person and injured 28 others at Jarrell, TX. Thunderstorms also produced softball size hail at Shamrock, TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Oklahoma and northeastern Texas to the Upper Ohio Valley. Thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes, including a twister which killed one person and injured another north of Corning, AR. There were 128 reports of large hail or damaging winds. Strong thunderstorm winds killed one person and injured six others at Folsomville, IN, and injured another five persons in southeastern Hardin County KY. In Arkansas, baseball size hail was reported near Fouke and near El Dorado. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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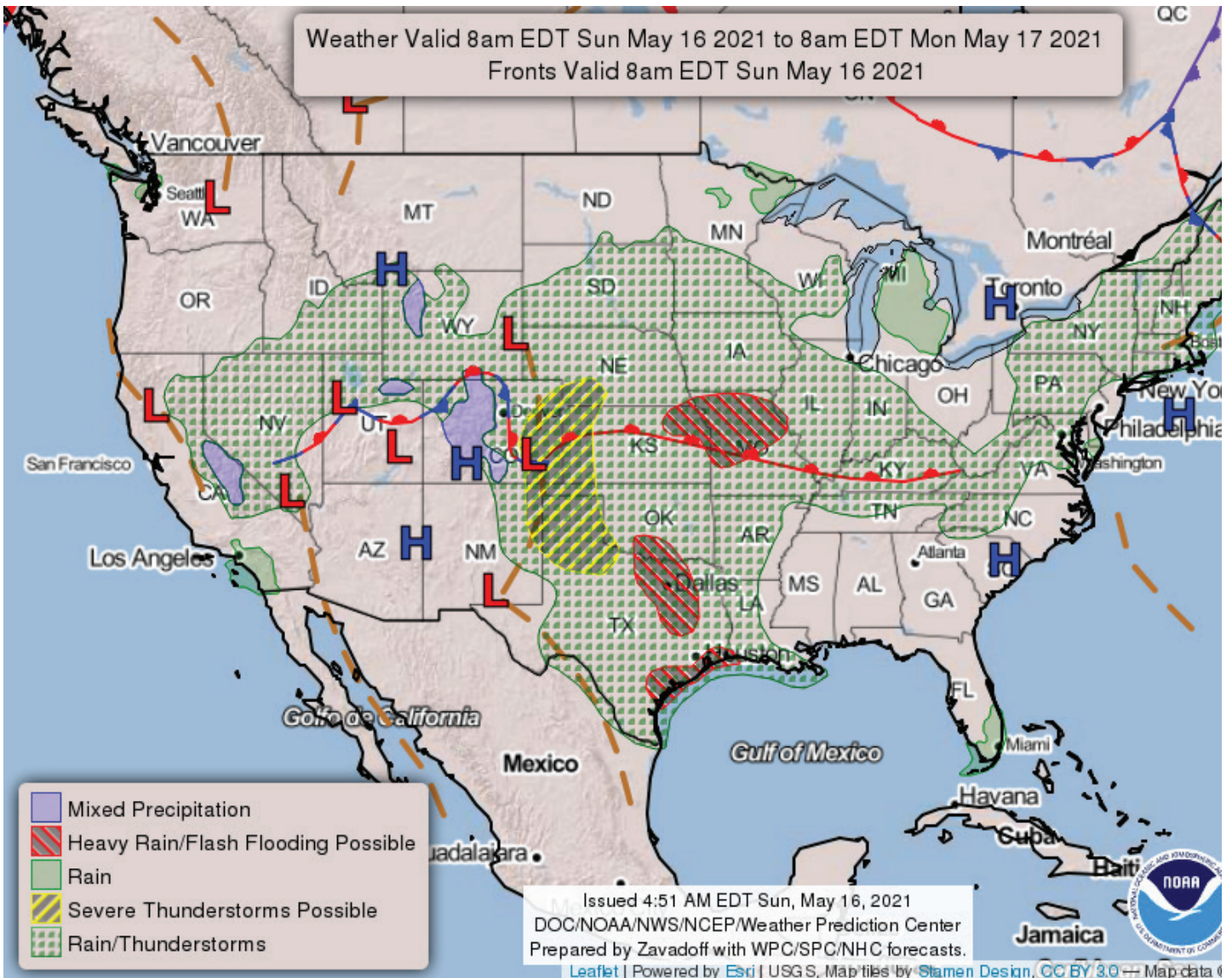
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 78 °F at 4:45 PM
Low Temp: 45 °F at 4:59 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 3:25 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 101° in 1934
Record Low: 23° in 2014
Average High: 71°F
Average Low: 44°F
Average Precip in May.: 1.65
Precip to date in May.: 0.25
Average Precip to date: 5.62
Precip Year to Date: 3.02
Sunset Tonight: 8:59 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:01 a.m.



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THE RESULTS OF RESTORATION

"I know I'm forgiven," he said, "but I don't have the same feelings I once had. When will they come back?"

While our salvation is established on facts, feelings often play an important role in our relationship with God. Our feelings come from the Holy Spirit, through the grace of God, to let us know the status of our relationship with Him. If there is joy and happiness, gladness and openness in our lives, we know God is with us. When we are uncomfortable in His presence and feel a sense of alienation from Him, we know there is a need to identify the problem, make things right, and restore our relationship with Him as it was.

When we go to God and experience His restoration, He, as well as others, will see the fruit of His forgiveness in our lives. David sets our example: "Then – after my restoration when I am given a recreated heart – I will teach transgressors Your ways and sinners will turn back to You." When we receive a recreated heart there is a renewed desire in us to worship and witness for God. "Old things have passed away and all things are new again!" When we restore our relationship with God and once again walk in His ways, we once again will sense the peace and power of His presence in our lives.

Is anyone a more powerful witness to the wonder of God's grace than someone who has been redeemed from a life of despair they created for themselves by being disobedient to God's laws? When we recover from our own self-inflicted wounds, we can recognize the pain and hurt in others who are suffering as we once suffered. We become open to their needs and willing to help them because we "have been there, done that, suffered, and recovered." We can identify with them and share God's grace through our lives.

And remember one important fact: the more we worship God, the closer we remain in touch with Him.

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, a journey with You that leads us to a life that is dedicated to worshiping You and witnessing to others. May we recognize our need to be with You constantly. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. Psalm 51:12-13

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
Cancelled Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

01-12-19-26-32

(one, twelve, nineteen, twenty-six, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

09-14-19-30-46, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 3

(nine, fourteen, nineteen, thirty, forty-six; Star Ball: three; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.98 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$468 million

Powerball

04-10-37-39-69, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 3

(four, ten, thirty-seven, thirty-nine, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$183 million

Unusual May FCS title game: South Dakota St vs Sam Houston

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — There are more twists to this FCS championship game than just being played in mid-May to wrap up a unique spring season.

Top-seeded South Dakota State takes on No. 2 seed Sam Houston on Sunday, guaranteeing that one of the Football Championship Subdivision playoff regulars will become a first-time champion. This is the 43rd title game in the division formerly known as I-AA.

A different Dakota is in Frisco with eight-time champion North Dakota State not there from Fargo for only the second time in 10 seasons. Sam Houston (9-0) has a shot at a perfect season while K.C. Keeler can become the winningest coach in FCS playoff history and the first to win titles at multiple schools.

Delaware grad Keeler won a championship in 2003 at his alma mater, which is what South Dakota State alumnus John Stiegelmeier is now attempting in his 24th season coaching the Jackrabbits (8-1).

For anyone who thinks an asterisk should be attached to the champion of this shortened and most unusual season for FCS, consider all it took to get to this point since the last title game in January 2020. There were constant COVID-19 tests, the uncertainty if they would play at all and now a finale only 3 1/2 months before kicking off another season.

"This season's been more draining mentally and physically than any other season in the past," South Dakota State linebacker Logan Backhaus said.

Fellow senior linebacker Preston Tetzlaff said anyone questioning the legitimacy of this season "probably aren't the ones playing this weekend. If they're playing this week, they wouldn't be saying that."

The Jackrabbits, in their ninth consecutive playoffs, are in their first championship game. Sam Houston is in its 12th FCS playoff, and twice lost in the title game played about 200 miles from its campus in Huntsville, Texas.

Sam Houston beat North Dakota State in the quarterfinals, then the Bearcats overcame a 21-point halftime deficit in their 38-35 semifinal win over No. 3 seed James Madison, the only team other than the Bison to win an FCS title since 2011. Sam Schmid had a 69-yard TD pass and two scoring runs as they scored 28 points in a 5 1/2-minute span.

"I don't think putting North Dakota State and James Madison in the same bracket as us is an asterisk at

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all," defensive lineman Jahari Key said. "So putting an asterisk by this championship is hilarious, and also ridiculous to even say such a thing."

THE COACHES

Keeler got his 23rd FCS playoff victory last week to match the record mark Jim Tressell had at Youngstown State before going to Ohio State and winning an FBS national title.

"I just think it's hilarious that they're mentioning me with Jim Tressell," Keeler said. "To me, it's just recognition of all the people that have worked for me or all the players that I've coached."

This is Keeler's 27th season as a head coach, his seventh at Sam Houston. He was at Division III Rowan before coaching his alma mater from 2002-2012, leading the Fightin' Blue Hens to their only FCS championship. Delaware also played in Frisco's first FCS title game in 2010.

Stiegelmeier's 174-106 record is all at South Dakota State, including 15 winning records in 17 seasons at the FCS level.

"We're excited to be in the final. It's been the goal of our program for a long time," he said. "We're not giddy excited, where you feel like you've accomplished the goal. ... The goal is to be 1-0 in Frisco, Texas."

RUNNING JACKS

South Dakota State dual-threat freshman quarterback Mark Gronowski is the seventh-leading rusher in the Missouri Valley Conference, third on his team behind junior Pierre Strong Jr. and freshman Isaiah Davis.

"It's really just a great combo of running backs," Gronowski said. "Pierre's just an elusive back who can make anyone miss. Isaiah can just basically be a bulldozer and run hard through the hole."

Strong has 650 yards rushing while Davis, who averages 7.8 yards per carry, has 640. Gronowski has rushed for 567 yards and seven touchdowns, while also passing for 1,549 yards with 15 TDs and three interceptions.

The Jackrabbits average 231 yards rushing per game, fifth-best among FCS schools that played at least six games. Sam Houston has the third-best rushing defense (79 yards allowed per game).

EXTRA POINTS

A limited capacity crowd of about 7,500 is expected at Toyota Stadium, the 20,000-seat home of MLS team FC Dallas where the FCS championship game is set to be played through at least 2025. ... There are 24 players from South Dakota on the Jackrabbits roster. "I love my home state, and it's a privilege to be able to represent them at the highest level possible in Division I football," senior center Wes Genant said.

Deputy fatally shoots armed man outside Rapid Valley home

RAPID VALLEY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a Pennington County sheriff's deputy fatally shot a Rapid Valley man who allegedly raised a gun toward deputies and civilians.

The incident happened Friday afternoon in the driveway of a residence in the Rapid City suburb, Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom said.

"Early information indicates that he was suicidal and intentionally provoked the confrontation with law enforcement to engage in the shooting," Thom told the Rapid City Journal.

The man's name has not been released.

The incident began with a 911 call about an unwanted subject at a Rapid Valley home, Thom said. The caller said a relative was intoxicated and physically and verbally fighting with family members.

The sheriff said four deputies arrived at the home and discovered that the man had gone back to his house. The deputies went to the man's house where they found him in the driveway holding a long gun, Thom said.

A sheriff's office release said the deputy shot at the man after he "leveled the gun in the direction of people on scene and ignored commands to drop the gun." Deputies provided aid to the man but authorities have not said where he died.

The four deputies and neighbors who were outside the home at the time were not hurt.

The Latest: Pope denounces violence between Israel, Hamas

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By The Associated Press undefined

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has denounced the “unacceptable” spiral of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, saying the deaths in particular of children was a “sign that they don’t want to build the future but want to destroy it.”

Francis prayed for peace, calm and international help to open a path of dialogue during his Sunday blessing, delivered from his studio window overlooking St. Peter’s Square.

The pope said: “I ask myself: this hatred and vendetta, what will it bring? Do we truly think that we can build peace by destroying the other?”

In unusually pointed comments, Francis added: “In the name of God, who created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity and are called to live as brothers, I appeal for calm” and an end to the violence.

Israeli airstrikes have been pounding Gaza City for days as heavy fighting has broken out between Israel and the territory’s militant Hamas rulers. The Gaza Health Ministry said 10 women and eight children were among the 26 people killed in Sunday’s airstrikes, with another 50 people wounded in the attack.

TOP NEWS IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT:

- Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flatten three buildings and kill at least 23 people on Sunday
- An AP reporter documents the terrifying final minutes of leaving the Gaza office before it is blow up by the Israelis
- An Israeli airstrike destroys a high-rise building that housed The Associated Press office in the Gaza Strip despite urgent demands by the new agency to halt
- Protesters in major US cities urge Israelis to halt attacks on the Gaza Strip
- French police use tear gas to quell pro-Palestinian march that was banned in Paris

BEIRUT — The 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation held an emergency virtual meeting Sunday over the situation in Gaza calling for an end to Israel’s military attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan urged the international community to work on ending Israel’s military operations against Gaza and to allow aid to reach the coastal region.

Speaking from Ramallah in the West Bank, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki blasted Israel calling it an “apartheid state” that is practicing “crimes and brutality against our people in Gaza.” He added that the latest round of violence that began on Monday has displaced 10,000 people.

“The rise of the Palestinian people has made it clear that Jerusalem is a red line,” Malki said. He added that “our people will not be exhausted by Israel’s killing machine.”

Malki said all of Israel’s attempts to make demographic changes in Sheik Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem will fail.

Malki urged Muslim countries to support the Palestinian people by all means urging them to impose political and economic sanctions against Israel.

JERUSALEM — Israeli police say they have arrested two suspects who snuck into the country from neighboring Jordan and were carrying knives.

Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said Sunday the two were on their way to Jerusalem to carry out an attack.

Jordan’s Foreign Ministry confirmed that two of its citizens had been arrested in Israel and said it was in contact with Israeli authorities to work on their release.

Jerusalem has seen weeks of Palestinian protests against heavy-handed tactics by Israeli police and Jewish settlers’ attempts to evict dozens of Palestinian families from their homes. Nightly clashes boiled over a week ago, triggering heavy fighting between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group ruling Gaza.

The violence has also spread within Israel itself, with Arabs and Jews attacking each other in several mixed cities, setting vehicles ablaze and destroying property.

Jordan, a close Western ally that made peace with Israel in 1994, has a large Palestinian population.

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JERUSALEM — Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 23 people on Sunday, medics said, making it the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and the territory's militant Hamas rulers nearly a week ago.

The Gaza Health Ministry said another 50 people were wounded in the attack. Rescuers were racing to pull survivors and bodies from the rubble.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader in a separate strike. It was the third such attack in the last two days.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as efforts to broker a cease-fire accelerate. A U.S. diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

The military said it struck the homes of Yehiyeh Sinwar, the most senior Hamas leader inside the territory, and his brother Muhammad, another senior Hamas member. On Saturday it destroyed the home of Khalil al-Hayeh, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch.

Brig. Gen. Hidaï Zilberman confirmed the strike on Sinwar's house in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis to army radio.

BERLIN — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in comments to Sunday's edition of the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that "Israel is using its right to self-defense to protect its population from Hamas' rocket terror."

He said there needs to be "1. An end to the rocket terror. 2. An end to the violence and 3. a return to talks on concrete confidence-building steps between Israelis and Palestinians and a two-state solution."

A pair of tweets from his ministry Sunday expanding on those comments quoted Maas as saying that he has made that clear in his talks over recent days with counterparts in the region. He voiced concern about "the reports about ongoing violence, and people's fear and desperation. This is an explosive mixture that could lead to unpredictable consequences, including for the region overall. We must prevent this happening."

There has been no specific German government comment so far about Saturday's Israeli strike that destroyed the high-rise building in Gaza that housed the offices of The Associated Press and other media.

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Sunday it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, the third such attack in as many days, after nearly a week of heavy Israeli airstrikes on the territory. The Palestinian militant group ruling Gaza has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as efforts to broker a cease-fire accelerate. A U.S. diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

The military said it struck the homes of Yehiyeh Sinwar, the most senior Hamas leader inside the territory, and his brother Muhammad, another senior Hamas member. On Saturday it destroyed the home of Khalil al-Hayeh, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch.

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israeli warplanes have struck several buildings and roads in a vital part of Gaza City early Sunday.

According to photos circulated by residents and journalists, the airstrikes created a crater that blocked one of the main roads leading to Shifa, the largest hospital in the strip.

The Health Ministry said the latest airstrikes left at least two dead and 25 wounded, including children and women. It said rescuers are still digging through the rubble and had so far pulled up five more wounded.

Two hours into the heavy bombardment, there has been no comment from the Israeli military.

BEIJING — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called on the U.N. Security Council to seek an early de-escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers. He also blamed the U.S. for the coun-

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cil's lack of action so far.

"Regrettably, the council has so far failed to reach an agreement, with the United States standing on the opposite side of international justice," the state-run Xinhua News Agency quoted Wang as saying in a phone conversation Saturday with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

He expressed support for a two-state solution, and said China, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, expects all parties to speak with a unified voice when the council discusses the conflict later Sunday.

Wang said the Security Council should reconfirm a two-state solution and urge Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks on that basis as soon as possible.

UNITED NATIONS -- A U.N. spokesman says Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "deeply disturbed" by the Israeli airstrike that destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City housing offices of several international media organizations and residential apartments, and is "dismayed" by the increasing number of civilian casualties.

"The secretary-general reminds all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

Earlier Saturday, an Israeli airstrike pulverized a high-rise building that housed The Associated Press, Al Jazeera and other media after warning that it was being targeted.

Guterres singled out the death of 10 members of the same family including children as a result of an Israeli airstrike Friday in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

LOS ANGELES — Hundreds of protesters shut down traffic as they took to the streets of Los Angeles, calling for an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

The protesters waved flags and signs that said "free Palestine" and shouted "long live intifada," or uprising. They marched from outside the federal building to the Israeli Consulate in the western part of the city on Saturday.

Police shut down traffic on Wilshire Boulevard, a major thoroughfare, and urged motorists to avoid the area. Police from multiple agencies were monitoring the ongoing demonstration.

Also on Saturday, hundreds of protesters gathered in Boston's Copley Square and walked a short distance through the streets to the location of the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters then unfurled a banner in the colors of the Palestinian flag with the words "Free Palestine" while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located.

Other smaller protests in support of Palestinians took place in Hartford and Pittsburgh.

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the ongoing campaign against Palestinian militants, now in its sixth day, will "continue as long as needed."

The prime minister spoke on Saturday from Israel's defense ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv and issued a warning to leaders of Gaza's militant Hamas group after a series of airstrikes targeted high-level officials and commanders.

Netanyahu says: "You cannot hide — not above ground, and not underground. Nobody is immune."

The Israeli leader added that there was "no more just or moral campaign" than Israel's against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and thanked President Joe Biden and other world leaders for their support.

Netanyahu's remarks came at the end of a day that saw Israeli airstrikes target and destroy a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets. Everyone was safely evacuated from the building before the strike hit.

JERUSALEM — Israel's Electric Company says that high voltage lines supplying the Gaza Strip with electricity were damaged by rocket fire by Palestinian militants.

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The company released a statement on Saturday saying five of the 10 lines have been damaged, in the latest escalation of fighting and that the company cannot fix them because there is no access to the area.

Damage to the power lines came amid days of intense fighting between Palestinian militants and Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza's only other source of electricity — besides the power provided by Israel — is its single power plant, which has been working only partially due to fuel shortages. However, both sources are insufficient to cover Gazans' needs.

Outages of at least eight hours have long been a daily occurrence in the strip and with the power plant not working at regular capacity, rolling blackouts have increased to 12-15 hours per day recently.

With the latest hits on the power line, more outages are expected.

BEIRUT — A top Hamas leader says militant groups in the Gaza Strip will not retreat in the face of attacks by Israeli troops, warning that their fighters still haven't used all their force at their disposal.

Ismail Haniyeh spoke during a rally attended by hundreds in the gas-rich nation of Qatar on Saturday night. He said that "resistance is the shortest road to Jerusalem" and that Palestinians will not accept anything less than a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

He added that "the Zionist enemy struck Gaza, flattened towers and carried out massacres," thinking that this will make militant groups retreat. He said that as the Israeli attacks escalate, "the resistance will increase (its force) to a higher level."

Haniyeh also said that despite the fact that Gaza has been under siege for nearly 15 years, militant groups will not retreat.

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has expressed "strong support" for Israel's strikes in Gaza in retaliation for Hamas missile attacks on its territory, but raised concerns about civilian casualties and the protection of journalists on a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The White House says Biden on Saturday also shared his "grave concern" about intercommunal violence within Israel and escalating tensions in the West Bank. Biden and Netanyahu also discussed Jerusalem, with Biden saying it should "be a place of peaceful coexistence for people of all faiths and backgrounds."

Biden also held his first call since taking office with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the violence, in which he called for Hamas, the PA's rival, to stop firing rockets into Israel.

The White House says Biden "expressed his support for steps to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy the dignity, security, freedom, and economic opportunity that they deserve" and highlighted the resumption of U.S. aid to the Palestinians under his administration.

The Latest: India's virus variant expected to dominate UK

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — Britain's health minister says a fast-spreading coronavirus variant first identified in India is likely to become the dominant strain of the virus in the U.K.

Health officials are conducting door-to-door testing in several areas of the country in an attempt to curb the spread of the variant, which the government has warned could disrupt the U.K.'s reopening plans. Surge vaccinations in key regions are to begin shortly.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the new strain, formally known as B.1.617.2, is more transmissible than the U.K.'s dominant strain. He told the BBC "it is likely it will become the dominant variant."

Hancock said scientists had a "high degree of confidence" that current vaccines work against the new variant, and there is no evidence it causes more a severe disease.

The government says it will go ahead with plans to ease lockdown restrictions on Monday. People in England will be able to eat a restaurant meal or drink a beer indoors, go to a movie and visit one another's homes for the first time in months.

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson says that if the variant causes a big surge in cases it could scupper

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plans to lift all remaining restrictions on June 21.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Hundreds of bodies found buried in the sand along India's riverbanks as cremation costs soar
- Peru runs into a daunting problem: a lack of cemetery space for COVID-19 victims
- Turkey eases some COVID-19 restrictions but keeps curfews on for weeknights and weekends
- UK races to test, vaccinate as virus variant from India threatens reopening plans
- Barefaced, footloose: New Orleans eases masking, OKs dancing
- Nepal scales back Hindu chariot festival amid virus surge

Follow more of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

NEW DELHI — Police are reaching out to villagers in northern India to investigate the recovery of bodies buried in shallow sand graves or washing up on the Ganges River banks. There's been speculation on social media that they are the remains of COVID-19 victims.

In jeeps and boats, police are using portable loudspeakers asking people not to dispose of bodies in rivers.

On Friday, rains exposed the cloth coverings of bodies buried on the riverbank in Prayagraj, a city in Uttar Pradesh state. A state government spokesman on Sunday denied local media reports that more than 1,000 corpses of COVID-19 victims were recovered from rivers in the past two weeks.

But others say COVID-19 deaths in the countryside are rising.

Ramesh Kumar Singh, a member of Bondhu Mahal Samiti, a philanthropic organization that helps cremate bodies, said the number of deaths is very high in rural areas, and poor people have been disposing of the bodies in the river because of the exorbitant cost of performing the last rites and a shortage of wood. The cremation cost has tripled up to 15,000 rupees (\$210).

LIMA, Peru — After Joel Bautista died of a heart attack last month in Peru, his family tried unsuccessfully to find an available grave at four different cemeteries. After four days, they resorted to digging a hole in his garden.

The excavation in a poor neighborhood in the capital city of Lima was broadcast live on television, attracting the attention of authorities and prompting them to offer the family a space on the rocky slopes of a cemetery.

"If there is no solution, then there will be a space here," Yeni Bautista told The Associated Press, explaining the family's decision to dig at the foot of a tropical hibiscus tree after her brother's body began to decompose.

The same plight is shared by other families across Peru.

After struggling to control the coronavirus pandemic for more than a year, the country now faces a parallel crisis: a lack of cemetery space. The problem affects everyone, not just relatives of COVID-19 victims, and some families have acted on their own, digging clandestine graves in areas surrounding some of Lima's 65 cemeteries.

BEIJING — A COVID-19 outbreak in Mongolia appears to be easing after a six weeks in which the sparsely populated country's coronavirus death toll rose from 15 to 219.

Authorities on Sunday reported 541 new cases and two deaths in the latest 24-hour period, China's Xinhua News Agency said. It was the sixth straight day of under 600 new cases, and down from a peak of 1,356 cases about two weeks ago.

Coffee shops, gyms and swimming pools were allowed to reopen at 50% capacity this weekend as the Mongolian government continued a gradual lifting of restrictions following a four-week lockdown that

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ended May 8, Xinhua said.

A ban on restaurants, bars, religious services and large gatherings for sports and cultural events remained in effect, the Chinese news agency said.

The total number of confirmed cases has increased since the beginning of April from 8,841 to 48,642. ____

ISTANBUL — Turkey's interior ministry on Sunday lifted a full lockdown that had ordered people to stay home to fight COVID-19 infections, shifting to a less-restrictive program that still involved curfews on weeknights and weekends.

The ministry called the steps that apply from Monday to June 1 a "gradual normalization."

Shopping malls will be able to reopen. Some businesses will remain closed, including gyms and cafes, but restaurants will be able to offer take away in addition to delivery. Preschools will resume in-person education but upper grades will continue remote learning.

Turks can return to their workplaces but will have to stay home from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. on weekdays and all day Saturday and Sunday, with the exception of walking to a market to buy food. Civil servants will continue working remotely or in shifts in offices. Foreign tourists and workers with special permits are exempt.

The Turkish government introduced a full lockdown end of April to curb a surge in infections and deaths, following record daily cases above 60,000. Saturday's health ministry statistics show 11,472 new cases. The total death toll is 44,537.

SEOUL — The Asian Football Confederation has announced North Korea has pulled out of qualification for the 2022 World Cup.

"The (AFC) has today confirmed the withdrawal of the DPR Korea Football Association from the Asian Qualifiers," the AFC said in a statement on Sunday.

Pyongyang has not yet given an official reason for pulling out of next month's qualifiers for the tournament, to be held in Qatar in November and December 2022, but South Korean media has reported that it is because of concerns over COVID-19.

Due to the spread of the virus, there have been no qualifiers in Asia since November 2019 and in order to reduce travel as the games resume, the AFC has ruled that all group matches in the second round of qualification will be played in hubs. ____

ORLANDO, Fla. — Visitors to Walt Disney World and Universal Studios-Orlando were allowed Saturday to remove their masks when outdoors, except when on attractions, in line or riding transportation.

Florida's major theme parks are adjusting face mask policies after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention loosened its recommendations on Thursday as more people get vaccinated for the coronavirus. Masks remain mandatory indoors, except in restaurants when seated or actively eating and drinking.

SeaWorld Orlando and its sister park, Tampa's Busch Gardens, are allowing guests who say they are fully vaccinated to remove their masks throughout the parks. The two parks will not require proof of vaccination but are asking guests to "respectfully comply."

The CDC guidance still calls for wearing masks in crowded indoor settings like buses, planes, hospitals, prisons and homeless shelters.

MILAN — Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi was released from Milan's San Raffaele Hospital on Saturday, where he was treated for complications related to an earlier bout with coronavirus.

The 84-year-old Berlusconi, who was diagnosed with COVID-19 last September, has been in and out of the hospital in recent weeks. He was most recently admitted last Monday. He also spent 24 days in the hospital under medical supervision in April.

The three-time former premier and media mogul left the hospital without passing in front of photographers and television cameras waiting outside. Last year, Berlusconi spent 10 days at the same hospital receiving treatment for COVID-19. He also received a pacemaker several years ago.

NEW YORK — Yale University is requiring its faculty and staff to get coronavirus vaccinations before the fall term, extending a requirement already imposed for students.

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The private university says faculty members, staffers and academic trainees must be fully inoculated by Aug. 1, although there are provisions for exemptions for reasons based on medical conditions or religious or "strongly held" personal beliefs.

More than 350 colleges and universities around the country are requiring vaccinations for students, at least those living on-campus. However, requirements for employees are somewhat rare. That's according to information compiled by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

BEIJING — China has canceled attempts to climb Mount Everest from its side of the world's highest peak because of fears of importing coronavirus cases from neighboring Nepal.

China's official Xinhua News Agency says the closure was confirmed in a notice from China's General Administration of Sport. The move reflects the abundance of caution China has taken in dealing with the pandemic.

While China has mostly curbed domestic transmission of the coronavirus, Nepal is experiencing a surge with record numbers of new infections and deaths.

China had issued permits to 38 people to climb Mount Everest this spring, and Nepal to 408 climbers. In Nepal, several climbers have reported testing positive for the coronavirus after they were brought down from the Everest base camp.

The month of May generally has the best weather for climbing Everest. Scores have reached the summit this week and more are expected to make attempts later this month once the weather improves. Two climbers have died on the Nepalese side, one Swiss and one American.

Islamic nations hold emergency summit on Israel-Gaza attacks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation opened an emergency meeting Sunday over the heavy fighting between Israel and the Gaza Strip's militant Hamas rulers, the first major move among Mideast nations still grappling with how to address the conflict.

While the Arab League and organizations like the Saudi-based OIC have maintained their view that the Palestinians should have their own independent state, Israel recently has reached recognition deals with several of its members. That, as well as the concerns of some nations over Hamas, has seen a somewhat muted response to the attacks as opposed to the full-throated response of decades past.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki of the Palestinian Authority, which administers autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, decried what he called Israel's "cowardly attacks" at the start of the meeting.

"We need to tell Allah that we will resist to the last day," he said. "We are facing a long-term occupation. That's the base of the problem. Crimes are committed against the Palestinians without consequences."

However, Malki's Palestinian Authority has no control over Hamas and the Gaza Strip, where the militants seized power in 2007.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu took a similarly hard line.

"Israel alone is responsible for the recent escalation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza," Cavusoglu said. "Our warnings to Israel last week went unheeded."

Across the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf states, reactions to the fighting has been mixed. In Qatar, home to the Al-Jazeera satellite network, hundreds turned out late Saturday night to listen to a speech by Hamas' top leader Ismail Haniyeh. He now splits his time between Turkey and Qatar, both of which back Hamas, as does Iran.

"The resistance will not give in," Haniyeh vowed as bodyguards stood behind him. He added that "resistance is the shortest road to Jerusalem" and that Palestinians will not accept anything less than a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Kuwait's parliament speaker reportedly spoke with Haniyeh on Saturday, as did Qatar's foreign minister.

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So too did Gen. Esmail Ghaani, the head of the expeditionary Quds Forces of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Then there are Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, two Gulf Arab states that reached recognition deals with Israel last year in the waning months of the Trump administration. Those nations, as well as Saudi Arabia, have reiterated their support of Palestinians obtaining their own independent state. However, government-linked media in those nations haven't been covering the current flare-up of violence nonstop like other networks in the region.

There are murmurs of dissent though. In the island nation of Bahrain, civil society groups signed a letter urging the kingdom to expel the Israeli ambassador over the violence. In the UAE, where political parties and protests are illegal, Palestinians in the workforces of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have expressed their anger quietly, worried about losing their residency permit. Some Emiratis also have expressed concerns.

"The region's only democracy," tweeted the Emirati writer and political analyst Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi in writing about Israel's strike on a Gaza building that housed the offices of The Associated Press and Al-Jazeera.

Cavusoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, criticized OIC members who reached recognition deals with Israel.

"There are a few who have lost their moral compass and voiced support for Israel," he said. "If there are half-hearted statements within our own family, how could we criticize others who (don't) take our words seriously?"

Hussein Ibish, a senior scholar at the Washington-based Arab Gulf States Institute, said most Gulf Arab leaders fear Hamas' rocket fire as "cynical, dangerous, unnecessarily provocative and endangering Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza alike." That takes the pressure off those Gulf leaders to respond, unlike in other confrontations involving the Al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third-holiest site in Jerusalem, or when Israeli settlers force Arab families out of their homes, he said.

"There won't be much sympathy for what is widely viewed in the Gulf as Israel's heavy-handed and disproportionate retaliation," Ibish wrote, "but it will be much easier for Gulf leaders and many citizens to regard the exchange as a tragic conflagration at the expense of ordinary people brought about by two leaderships over which they have neither control nor responsibility."

Israeli strikes kill 26, topple buildings in Gaza City

By FARES AKRAM and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 26 people Sunday, medics said, making it the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and the territory's militant Hamas rulers nearly a week ago.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 10 women and eight children were among those killed, with another 50 people wounded in the attack. A rescuer could be seen shouting into a hole in the rubble. "Can you hear me?" he called out. "Are you OK?" Minutes later, first responders managed to pull a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, Yahiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders, who have gone underground.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators try to broker a cease-fire. But targeting the group's leaders could hinder those efforts. A U.S. diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

The latest outbreak of violence began in east Jerusalem earlier this month, when Palestinians protested attempts by settlers to forcibly evict a number of Palestinian families from their homes and Israeli police measures at Al-Aqsa Mosque, a frequent flashpoint located on a mount in the Old City revered by Muslims and Jews. Hamas fired rockets toward Jerusalem late Monday, triggering the Israeli assault on Gaza.

The turmoil has also spilled over elsewhere, fueling protests in the occupied West Bank and stoking

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violence within Israel between its Jewish and Arab citizens, with clashes and vigilante attacks on people and property.

At least 181 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, including 52 children and 31 women, with 1,225 wounded. Eight Israelis have been killed, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

The military said Sunday it struck Sinwar's home and that of his brother Muhammad, another senior Hamas member. On Saturday it destroyed the home of Khalil al-Hayeh, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch.

Hamas' upper echelon has gone into hiding in Gaza, and it is unlikely any were at home at the time of the strikes. Hamas' top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, divides his time between Turkey and Qatar, both of which provide political support to the group.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad militant group have acknowledged 20 fighters killed since the fighting broke out Monday. Israel says the real number is far higher and has released the names and photos of two dozen alleged operatives it says were "eliminated."

An Egyptian diplomat said Israel's targeting of Hamas political leaders would complicate cease-fire efforts. The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations, said Cairo is working to broker an end to the fighting. A U.S. diplomat has also been dispatched to the region and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

The Egyptian diplomat said the destruction of Hamas' rocket capabilities would require a ground invasion that would "inflame the whole region." Egypt, which made peace with Israel decades ago, has threatened to "suspend" cooperation in various fields, the official said, without elaborating.

Hamas and other militant groups have fired some 2,900 rockets into Israel. The military said 450 of the rockets had fallen short or misfired, while Israeli air defenses intercepted 1,150.

The interception rate appeared to have significantly dropped since the start of the conflict, when Israel said 90% were intercepted. The military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel has meanwhile carried out hundreds of airstrikes across impoverished Gaza, which is home to more than 2 million Palestinians and has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade since Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007.

Israel has leveled a number of Gaza City's tallest office and residential buildings, alleging they contain Hamas military infrastructure. On Saturday, Israel bombed the 12-story al-Jalaa Building, where the office of The Associated Press was located. The building also housed the TV network Al-Jazeera and other media outlets, along with several floors of apartments.

"The campaign will continue as long as it is required," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. He alleged that Hamas military intelligence was operating inside the building.

Israel routinely cites a Hamas presence as a reason for targeting certain locations in airstrikes, including residential buildings. The military also has accused the militant group of using journalists as human shields, but provided no evidence to back up the claims.

The AP has operated from the building for 15 years, including through three previous wars between Israel and Hamas. During those conflicts as well as the current one, the news agency's cameras from its top floor office and roof terrace offered 24-hour live shots as militants' rockets arched toward Israel and Israeli airstrikes hammered the city and its surroundings.

"We have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said in a statement. "This is something we actively check to the best of our ability. We would never knowingly put our journalists at risk."

In the afternoon, the military called the building's owner and warned a strike would come within an hour. AP staffers and other occupants evacuated safely. Soon after, three missiles hit the building and destroyed it, bringing it crashing down in a giant cloud of dust.

"The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today," Pruitt said. "We are shocked and horrified."

He said the AP was seeking information from the Israeli government and was engaged with the U.S. State Department to learn more.

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U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken later spoke by phone with Pruitt, offering his support for independent journalists and media organizations, and the White House said it had communicated directly with Israel to urge safety for journalists.

The Biden administration has affirmed its support for Israel while working to de-escalate the crisis. U.S. diplomat Hady Amr is in the region as part of efforts to broker a truce.

Hundreds of bodies found buried along Indian riverbanks

By RAJESH KUMAR SINGH and BISWAJEET BANERJEE Associated Press

PRAYAGRAJ, India (AP) — Police are reaching out to villagers in northern India to investigate the recovery of bodies buried in shallow sand graves or washing up on the Ganges River banks, prompting speculation on social media that they were the remains of COVID-19 victims.

In jeeps and boats, the police used portable loudspeakers with microphones asking people not to dispose of the bodies in rivers. "We are here to help you perform the last rites," police said.

On Friday, rains exposed the cloth coverings of bodies buried in shallow sand graves on the riverbank in Prayagraj, a city in Uttar Pradesh state.

Navneet Sehgal, a state government spokesman, on Sunday denied local media reports that more than 1,000 corpses of COVID-19 victims had been recovered from rivers in the past two weeks. "I bet these bodies have nothing to do with COVID-19," he said.

He said some villagers did not cremate their dead, as is customary, due to a Hindu tradition during some periods of religious significance and disposed of them in rivers or digging graves on riverbanks.

K.P. Singh, a senior police officer, said authorities had earmarked a cremation ground for those who died of COVID-19 on the Prayagraj riverbank and the police were no longer allowing any burials on the riverfront.

Sehgal said authorities have found "a small number" of bodies on the riverbanks, he said, but didn't give a figure.

Ramesh Kumar Singh, a member of Bondhu Mahal Samiti, a philanthropic organization that helps cremate bodies, said the number of deaths is very high in rural areas, and poor people have been disposing of the bodies in the river because of the exorbitant cost of performing the last rites and a shortage of wood. The cremation cost has tripled up to 15,000 rupees (\$210).

Health authorities last week retrieved 71 bodies that washed up on the Ganges River bank in neighboring Bihar state.

Authorities performed post mortems but said they could not confirm the cause of death due to decomposition.

A dozen corpses were also found last week buried in sand at two locations on the riverbank in Unnao district, 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh state capital. District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said an investigation is underway to identify the cause of death.

India's two big states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with nearly 358 million people in total, are among the worst hit in the surge sweeping through the country with devastating death tolls. Hapless villagers have been rushing the sick to nearby towns and cities for treatment, many of them dying on the way, victims of India's crumbling health care.

After hitting record highs for weeks, the number of new cases was stabilizing, said Dr. V.K. Paul, a government health expert.

The Health Ministry on Sunday reported 311,170 confirmed cases in the past 24 hours, down from 326,098 on Saturday.

It also reported 4,077 additional deaths, taking the total fatalities to 270,284. Both figures are almost certainly a vast undercount, experts say.

Turkey eases COVID-19 restrictions but keeps many curfews

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

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ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey's interior ministry on Sunday lifted a full lockdown that had ordered people to stay home to fight COVID-19 infections, shifting to a less-restrictive program that still involved curfews on weeknights and weekends.

In a new directive, the ministry called the steps that apply from Monday to June 1 a "gradual normalization."

Shopping malls will be able to reopen. Some businesses will remain closed, including gyms and cafes, but restaurants will be able to offer take away in addition to delivery. Preschools will resume in-person education but upper grades will continue remote learning.

Turks can return to their workplaces but will have to stay home from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. on weekdays and all day Saturday and Sunday, with the exception of walking to a market to buy food. Civil servants will continue working remotely or in shifts in offices. Foreign tourists and workers with special permits are exempt.

Unvaccinated senior citizens over 65 will only be allowed to leave their homes between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekdays. Intercity travel during curfews is subject to permission.

Despite the curfew, hundreds of soccer fans were out in Istanbul late Saturday to celebrate the Super League win for Besiktas.

New infections and COVID-19 deaths exploded after Turkey lifted most restrictions in March, prompting the government to introduce a full lockdown at end of April. It was the strictest measure the government had taken since the beginning of the pandemic, following record new cases above 60,000 a day.

Health ministry statistics showed 11,472 new cases reported Saturday and an overall confirmed death toll of 44,537. Experts say both numbers, like in many nations, are undercounts due to limited testing and missed cases.

Turkey's president said the COVID-19 restrictions aimed to reduce new cases to below 5,000 a day so that Turkey's vital tourism industry wouldn't be devastated for a second straight summer.

Myanmar junta attacks western town that resisted coup

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The U.S. and British embassies in Myanmar expressed concern about reports of fierce government attacks on a town in western Chin state, where the ruling junta declared martial law because of armed resistance to military rule.

The fighting began around 6 a.m. Saturday when government troops reinforced by helicopters began shelling the western part of the town of Mindat, destroying several homes, said a spokesman of the Chinland Defence Force. It is a locally formed militia group opposed to the February coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Helicopters also took part in the attack, according to the spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

"Mindat town is now under siege and is bracing for an all-out assault by the junta troops from air and by land," said a statement by the Chin Human Rights Organization.

The shadow National Unity Government, set up by lawmakers who were blocked by the army from taking their seats in Parliament, warned that "within the next 48 hours, Mindat can potentially become a battleground and thousands of people are facing the danger of being displaced." Many have already left the town of about 50,000 people, said a resident contacted by phone who was also fleeing.

The Mindat Township People's Administration, another opposition grouping, claimed that 15 young men had been seized by government troops and used as human shields. It said at least five defenders of the town had been killed in clashes and at least 10 others wounded.

None of these details could be independently verified, but a Myanmar state television broadcast Saturday night reported that fighting was going on, and acknowledged the town's defenders have been putting up stiff resistance against the army.

"The military's use of weapons of war against civilians, including this week in Mindat, is a further demonstration of the depths the regime will sink to to hold onto power," the British Embassy said on Twitter.

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"We call on the military to cease violence against civilians."

The U.S. Embassy said it was "aware of increasing violence in Mindat, including reports of the military shooting civilians," and urged that evidence of atrocities be sent to U.N. investigators.

Detailed tallies compiled by several different watchdog groups say government security forces have killed upwards of 750 protesters and bystanders as they have tried to suppress opposition to the military's seizure of power. In April, security forces were accused of killing more than 80 people in one day to destroy street barricades that militants had set up as strongholds in the city of Bago.

In many or most cases, police and soldiers were trying to break up peaceful protests, though as they increased the use of lethal force, some protesters fought back in self-defense. In recent weeks there has been an upsurge in small bombings in many cities, mostly causing little damage and few casualties.

The junta says the death toll is less than 300, and the use of force was justified to quash what it calls riots.

Mindat's resisters are only lightly armed, mostly with a traditional type of single-shot hunting rifle, but the territory around the town is mountainous and wooded, favoring defenders over attackers.

The report on state television MRTV listed past attacks on government forces and installations, most recently on Thursday, when it claimed a force of about 100 blocked security forces from entering the town, destroying one vehicle and leaving an unspecified number of security forces dead and missing.

In a later attack, it said, an even bigger force was said to have launched an attack from the city on security forces patrolling nearby, destroying six vehicles and causing an unspecified number of government casualties.

The opposition government earlier this month announced a plan to unify groups such as the Chinland Defense Force into a national "People's Defense Force," which would serve as a precursor to a "Federal Union Army" of democratic forces including ethnic minorities.

Khin Ma Ma Myo, deputy defense minister of the shadow government, said one of the duties of the People's Defense Force is to protect the resistance movement from military attacks and violence instigated by the junta.

The Latest: China calls for UN council action, slams US

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the continuing violence between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers amid the latest escalation in the Middle East:

BEIJING — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called on the U.N. Security Council to seek an early de-escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers. He also blamed the U.S. for the council's lack of action so far.

"Regrettably, the council has so far failed to reach an agreement, with the United States standing on the opposite side of international justice," the state-run Xinhua News Agency quoted Wang as saying in a phone conversation Saturday with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

He expressed support for a two-state solution, and said China, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, expects all parties to speak with a unified voice when the council discusses the conflict later Sunday.

Wang said the Security Council should reconfirm a two-state solution and urge Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks on that basis as soon as possible.

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israeli warplanes have struck several buildings and roads in a vital part of Gaza City early Sunday.

According to photos circulated by residents and journalists, the airstrikes created a crater that blocked one of the main roads leading to Shifa, the largest hospital in the strip.

The Health Ministry said the latest airstrikes left at least two dead and 25 wounded, including children and women. It said rescuers are still digging through the rubble and had so far pulled up five more wounded.

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Two hours into the heavy bombardment, there has been no comment from the Israeli military.

UNITED NATIONS -- A U.N. spokesman says Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "deeply disturbed" by the Israeli airstrike that destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City housing offices of several international media organizations and residential apartments, and is "dismayed" by the increasing number of civilian casualties.

"The secretary-general reminds all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

Earlier Saturday, an Israeli airstrike pulverized a high-rise building that housed The Associated Press, Al Jazeera and other media after warning that it was being targeted.

Guterres singled out the death of 10 members of the same family including children as a result of an Israeli airstrike Friday in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

LOS ANGELES — Hundreds of protesters shut down traffic as they took to the streets of Los Angeles, calling for an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

The protesters waved flags and signs that said "free Palestine" and shouted "long live intifada," or uprising. They marched from outside the federal building to the Israeli Consulate in the western part of the city on Saturday.

Police shut down traffic on Wilshire Boulevard, a major thoroughfare, and urged motorists to avoid the area. Police from multiple agencies were monitoring the ongoing demonstration.

Also on Saturday, hundreds of protesters gathered in Boston's Copley Square and walked a short distance through the streets to the location of the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters then unfurled a banner in the colors of the Palestinian flag with the words "Free Palestine" while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located.

Other smaller protests in support of Palestinians took place in Hartford and Pittsburgh, where footage shows one speaker at the protest called on lawmakers to put restrictions on how Israel can spend aid from the United States.

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that the ongoing campaign against Palestinian militants, now in its sixth day, will "continue as long as needed."

The prime minister spoke on Saturday from Israel's defense ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv and issued a warning to leaders of Gaza's militant Hamas group after a series of airstrikes targeted high-level officials and commanders.

Netanyahu says: "You cannot hide — not above ground, and not underground. Nobody is immune."

The Israeli leader added that there was "no more just or moral campaign" than Israel's against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and thanked President Joe Biden and other world leaders for their support.

Netanyahu's remarks came at the end of a day that saw Israeli airstrikes target and destroy a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets. Everyone was safely evacuated from the building before the strike hit.

JERUSALEM — Israel's Electric Company says that high voltage lines supplying the Gaza Strip with electricity were damaged by rocket fire by Palestinian militants.

The company released a statement on Saturday saying five of the 10 lines have been damaged, in the latest escalation of fighting and that the company cannot fix them because there is no access to the area.

Damage to the power lines came amid days of intense fighting between Palestinian militants and Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza's only other source of electricity — besides the power provided by Israel — is its single power plant, which has been working only partially due to fuel shortages. However, both sources are insufficient

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to cover Gazans' needs.

Outages of at least eight hours have long been a daily occurrence in the strip and with the power plant not working at regular capacity, rolling blackouts have increased to 12-15 hours per day recently.

With the latest hits on the power line, more outages are expected.

BEIRUT — A top Hamas leader says militant groups in the Gaza Strip will not retreat in the face of attacks by Israeli troops, warning that their fighters still haven't used all their force at their disposal.

Ismail Haniyeh spoke during a rally attended by hundreds in the gas-rich nation of Qatar on Saturday night. He said that "resistance is the shortest road to Jerusalem" and that Palestinians will not accept anything less than a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

He added that "the Zionist enemy struck Gaza, flattened towers and carried out massacres," thinking that this will make militant groups retreat. He said that as the Israeli attacks escalate, "the resistance will increase (its force) to a higher level."

Haniyeh also said that despite the fact that Gaza has been under siege for nearly 15 years, militant groups will not retreat.

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has expressed "strong support" for Israel's strikes in Gaza in retaliation for Hamas missile attacks on its territory, but raised concerns about civilian casualties and the protection of journalists on a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The White House says Biden on Saturday also shared his "grave concern" about intercommunal violence within Israel and escalating tensions in the West Bank. Biden and Netanyahu also discussed Jerusalem, with Biden saying it should "be a place of peaceful coexistence for people of all faiths and backgrounds."

Biden also held his first call since taking office with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the violence, in which he called for Hamas, the PA's rival, to stop firing rockets into Israel.

The White House says Biden "expressed his support for steps to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy the dignity, security, freedom, and economic opportunity that they deserve" and highlighted the resumption of U.S. aid to the Palestinians under his administration.

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has spoken on the phone with President Joe Biden and urged the U.S. to intervene in the conflict and "put an end to Israeli attacks on Palestinians."

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa says Abbas on Saturday updated Biden on the escalations across the Palestinian territories and said he was working to halt "the Israeli aggression against our people and to reach a cease-fire."

The report says Abbas also told Biden that "security and stability will be achieved when the Israeli occupation ends," adding that Palestinians are ready and willing to work toward peace with international mediators.

Biden stressed the need to achieve calm and reduce violence in the Mideast, noting intensive American diplomatic efforts to that end. That's according to the Wafa statement.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Qatar's foreign minister has met with a top Hamas official.

That's according to a statement by Qatar's Foreign Ministry on Saturday. It said Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met Hamas leader Ismail Haniya in the capital, Doha.

The Foreign Ministry said Sheikh Mohammed "stressed the need for the international community to act urgently to stop the repeated brutal Israeli attacks against civilians in Gaza."

There was no mention of the Israeli strike that toppled a Gaza tower that was home to offices of both The Associated Press, Doha's Al-Jazeera satellite news network and others.

Meanwhile, Arab League chief said Saturday that Arab states' ambassadors to the United Nations are trying to rally international support for Palestinians amid Israeli attacks on Gaza .

Ahmed Aboul Gheit called upon the U.N. Security Council to "fulfill its responsibilities" in holding Israel

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accountable in a session scheduled on Sunday to discuss the violence.

CAIRO — An Egyptian intelligence official says efforts to reach a cease-fire between Israel and the Gaza militant groups are ongoing and have gained a push with the arrival of a U.S. envoy to Tel Aviv.

The official said Saturday that Egypt and other mediators hope that the U.S. will pressure Israel to end the fighting.

The official said it's up to the U.S. "to order Israel to stop such disastrous" actions "and added that "the situation has started to get out of control in the occupied Palestinian territories." referring to protests in West Bank, Jerusalem and other areas.

He says the mediators do not expect a cease-fire before the U.N. Security Council meeting Sunday.

The official says Egypt is now seeking an hours-long lull to evacuate severely wounded people from Gaza. He says Egypt is pushing for such a humanitarian pause overnight as ambulances are waiting on the Egyptian side of the border.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. U.S. diplomat Hady Amr, the deputy assistant secretary for Israeli and Palestinian affairs, is now in the region to try resolve the escalation.

— Samy Magdy in Cairo;

BEIRUT — Hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinians have protested along the Lebanon-Israel border, with some climbing a border wall and triggering Israeli fire that wounded one person.

The protest on Saturday evening in the Lebanese border village of Adaisseh saw hundreds marching and waving Palestinian, Lebanese and yellow flags of the militant Hezbollah group.

Some protesters climbed a high border wall where they placed Palestinian and Hezbollah flags.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that Israeli troops fired warning shots near Adaisseh, wounding one person who was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Lebanese and Palestinians from around Lebanon have been heading to the border to protest against Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip over the past days. On Friday, Israeli troops opened fire at protesters who crossed a border fence, killing a 21-year-old Hezbollah member.

Earlier Saturday, an Israeli military spokesman warned Lebanese authorities not to allow protesters to breach the border.

VIENNA, Austria — An international network of journalists and media executives "vehemently" condemn the Israeli airstrike on a Gaza City building housing the offices of The Associated Press and broadcaster Al-Jazeera.

Barbara Trionfi, the executive director of the International Press Institute, said after Saturday's airstrike that "the targeting of news organizations is completely unacceptable, even during an armed conflict."

She added that "it represents a gross violation of human rights and internationally agreed norms."

Three heavy missiles struck and destroyed the 12-story building about an hour after the Israeli military telephoned the owner to warn a strike was imminent. AP staffers and other tenants safely evacuated the building, which also contained residential apartments.

AP Vice President and Editor at Large John Daniszewski, who chairs IPI's North American Committee and is special envoy for journalist safety, said "there is no doubt that Israeli forces were aware that the media offices would be destroyed."

The Israeli military said the militant group Hamas was operating inside the building, but it provided no evidence to back up the claim.

TEHRAN, Iran — An Iranian state TV channel says the head of the expeditionary force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has had a phone call with the head of the militant Hamas group.

Al-Alam, the Arabic-language service of the Iranian state television, reported that Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh spoke by telephone with Quds Force commander Gen. Esmail Ghaani.

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Ghaani reportedly praised Hamas as offering a "unique and successful answer" to Israel. Hamas officials have praised Iran for providing it weapons and aid in its fighting against Israel, Tehran's regional rival.

The report comes amid a dramatic escalation in the confrontation between Israel and Hamas this week. An Israeli airstrike on Saturday targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets, including Al-Jazeera and also Kuwait's state television.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The foreign ministers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia are calling for an immediate cease-fire in the fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

That's according to a statement on Saturday carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency. It says that Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan had spoken to Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.

It said the two both agreed that an immediate cease-fire was needed. Egypt has been trying to negotiate a stop to the fighting.

The Saudi statement also said the two diplomats called on "the international community to confront the aggressive Israeli practices against the brotherly Palestinian people."

JERUSALEM — President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have spoken about the situation with Gaza.

According to a statement from Netanyahu's office, the Israeli leader updated Biden on the developments and actions that Israel has taken and intends to take. It says Netanyahu also thanked Biden for the "unreserved support of the United States for our right to defend ourselves."

It says Netanyahu emphasized in the conversation that Israel is doing everything to avoid harming the uninvolved. The statement added "the proof of this is that in the towers where there are terrorist targets attacked by the IDF, they are evacuated from the uninvolved."

The Biden-Netanyahu call came just hours after an Israeli airstrike on Saturday targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An American organization promoting literature and freedom of speech has called Israel's airstrike that destroyed a building in Gaza that was home to the offices of The Associated Press and other media "deeply disturbing."

PEN America said in a statement after Saturday's strike that the only reason the world knows about the ongoing fighting between Gaza's Hamas rulers and Israel is due to the "tireless, indefatigable work of journalists, risking their lives to inform the world."

The organization demanded a detailed accounting of why Israel launched the strike. PEN America added that "the resulting destruction will hobble the ability of professional journalists to do their work documenting a fraught, complex conflict at a critical time."

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Al-Jazeera has called the Israeli bombing that destroyed its office in Gaza a "clear act" to stop journalists from reporting on the conflict between it and Hamas.

Al-Jazeera issued the statement Saturday night after an Israeli strike that destroyed the building that was also home to the Gaza offices of The Associated Press.

The Doha-based broadcaster said in a statement: "Al-Jazeera calls on all media and human right institutions to join forces in denouncing these ruthless bombing and to hold the government of Israel accountable for deliberately targeting journalists and media institutions."

Mostefa Souag, acting director-general of Al-Jazeera Media Network, called the Israeli strike a "war crime." "The aim of this heinous crime is to silence the media and to hide the untold carnage and suffering of the people of Gaza," Souag said.

Al-Jazeera is a major broadcaster in the Mideast, funded by the Qatari government. It operates in both Israel and the Palestinian territories

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ISTANBUL — The communications director to Turkey's president tweeted that Israel's targeting of The Associated Press and Al-Jazeera offices in the Gaza Strip were a blow on the freedom of press.

The airstrike on Saturday targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets.

Fahrettin Altun said after the attack: "I curse these lowly attacks by Israel hitting press centers to cover up its massacres." He also claimed that "Israel is continuing its massacres and war crimes."

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu tweeted that Turkey stands with the Palestinians, who are still facing "ethnic, religious and cultural cleansing."

AP staffers and other tenants safely evacuated the building after the Israeli military telephoned a warning that the strike was imminent within an hour. Three heavy missiles struck the 12-story building, collapsing it in a giant cloud of dust.

WASHINGTON — The White House says Israel has a "paramount responsibility" to ensure the safety of journalists covering the spiraling conflict.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki tweeted on Saturday that the U.S. has "communicated directly to the Israelis that ensuring the safety and security of journalists and independent media is a paramount responsibility."

President Joe Biden has urged a de-escalation, but has publicly backed Israel's right to self-defense from Hamas rockets fired from Gaza.

The White House statement followed an Israeli airstrike that targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets. AP's president and CEO Gary Pruitt said the agency was "shocked and horrified" at the strike.

AP staffers and other tenants safely evacuated the building after the military telephoned a warning that the strike was imminent within an hour. Three heavy missiles struck the 12-story building, collapsing it in a giant cloud of dust.

MADRID — Thousands have marched in Spain's capital to protest the attacks by Israel's military on the Gaza Strip.

Many waved Palestinian flags as they marched toward Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square on Saturday.

Protesters chanted "This is not war, this is genocide" in Spanish. Some held up homemade signs that read "'USA Terrorist State" and "Muslim Lives Matter."

The rallies in Madrid and elsewhere in the world are taking place against the backdrop of a most serious escalation in the Mideast.

On Saturday, an Israeli airstrike targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets hours after another Israeli air raid on a densely populated refugee camp killed at least 10 Palestinians from an extended family, mostly children.

BAGHDAD — Hundreds of demonstrators have gathered in cities across Iraq to stand in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and Jerusalem.

The demonstrators on Saturday waved Palestinian flags and banners across five provinces in rallies called for by influential Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Al-Sadr called on followers to take to the streets and support Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which is under attack by the Israeli military.

Protesters gathered in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, and the southern provinces of Babylon, Dhi Qar, Diwanieh and Basra in a show of support. In Baghdad's central Tahrir Square, demonstrators carried a Palestinian flag several feet long. Many also held up photos of al-Sadr.

Al-Sadr is a firebrand cleric who wields significant power in the country. In the May 2018 elections his party won the most number of seats.

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BEIRUT — Hundreds of people have participated in the funeral of a Hezbollah fighter who was shot dead along the Lebanon-Israel border during a rally denouncing Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

The funeral of Mohammed Tahhan was held in his hometown of Adloun in southern Lebanon on Saturday afternoon. The 21-year-old man died of wounds sustained on Friday, shortly after he was struck during the protest at the border.

On Saturday, scores of Palestinian and Lebanese youth gathered in the border area again to rally against the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. Lebanese troops detained several people who tried to reach the border wall.

Earlier in the day, an Israeli military spokesman warned Lebanese authorities not to allow protesters to breach the border.

A small group had breached the fence on Friday and crossed the border into Israel, triggering the shooting. The Israeli military said troops fired warning shots toward the group after they sabotaged the fence and crossed over briefly.

BERLIN — The United Nations' human rights chief is urging all in what has developed into a battle between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers to lower tensions, and faulted actions by both sides.

Michelle Bachelet, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, said in a statement issued in Geneva on Saturday that "rather than seeking to calm tensions, inflammatory rhetoric from leaders on all sides appears to be seeking to excite tensions rather than to calm them."

Bachelet's statement was issued on Saturday, shortly before an Israeli airstrike destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of The Associated Press and other media outlets.

In the statement, Bachelet "warned that the firing of large numbers of indiscriminate rockets by Palestinian armed groups into Israel, including densely populated areas, in clear violation of international humanitarian law, amounts to war crimes."

There also are concerns that some attacks by the Israeli military in Gaza "have targeted civilian objects that, under international humanitarian law, do not meet the requirements to be considered as military objectives."

It added that "the failure to adhere to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of military operations amounts to a serious violation of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes."

BERLIN — Iran's foreign minister has called off a planned visit to his Austrian counterpart in Vienna. The decision came after Austria's chancellery and foreign ministry flew the Israeli flag as a signal of solidarity in Israel's conflict with the militant Hamas group.

Austrian daily Die Presse reported Saturday that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was due to meet Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg on Saturday morning. But he called off the trip over the Austrian leaders' decision to fly the Israeli flag on Friday.

The Austria Press Agency said Schallenberg's spokeswoman, Claudia Tuertscher, confirmed the report. She said: "We regret this."

Vienna has been hosting negotiations in recent weeks aimed at bringing the United States back into the 2015 nuclear deal aimed at allaying concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions. France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China are still parties to that agreement.

Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, tweeted on Friday that Austria "so far been a great host for negotiations" but it was "shocking & painful to see flag of the occupying regime, that brutally killed tens of innocent civilians, inc many children in just few days, over govt offices in Vienna."

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia has called for foreign ministers of the world's largest body of Muslim nations to hold a meeting Sunday. The gathering is to discuss Israeli acts of violence against Palestinians and the Israeli police's use of force against protesters at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

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The kingdom will host the virtual summit, gathering ministers of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation "to discuss the Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territory," particularly acts of violence in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the body said Saturday.

The Saudi-headquartered OIC includes countries Iran, Turkey, Indonesia and a range of Muslim majority nations.

The sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, is a sensitive and emotive issue for Muslims around the world. The OIC was formed 51 years ago in response to a Jewish extremist arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem.

The hilltop on which the mosque stands is also sacred to Jews, who revere it as the Temple Mount because it was the site of the biblical temples. Some Jews and evangelical Christians support building a new Jewish temple on the site, an idea that Muslims find alarming because they fear it would lead to the mosque being partitioned or demolished.

RĀMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinians have begun gathering across the occupied West Bank to mark the anniversary of the displacement of hundreds of thousands of refugees from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

Nakba Day, Arabic for "catastrophe," comes amid widespread Jewish-Arab violence in Israel and heavy fighting between Israel and the Islamic militant group Hamas, which rules Gaza. The main event Saturday was held in West Bank city of Ramallah, where the internationally-backed Palestinian Authority is headquartered.

On Friday, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank held some of the largest protests in years and clashed with Israeli forces, who shot and killed 11 people, including a Palestinian who tried to stab a soldier at a military position.

Some 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes during the 1948 war. Today, they and their descendants number around 5.7 million and mostly reside in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

'Shocking and horrifying': Israel destroys AP office in Gaza

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli airstrike on Saturday destroyed a high-rise building that housed The Associated Press office in the Gaza Strip, despite repeated urgent calls from the news agency to the military to halt the impending attack. AP called the strike "shocking and horrifying."

Twelve AP staffers and freelancers were working and resting in the bureau on Saturday afternoon when the Israeli military telephoned a warning, giving occupants of the building one hour to evacuate. Everyone was able to get out, grabbing a few belongings, before three heavy missiles struck the 12-story building, collapsing it into a giant cloud of dust.

Although no one was hurt, the airstrike demolished an office that was like a second home for AP journalists and marked a new chapter in the already rocky relationship between the Israeli military and the international media. Press-freedom groups condemned the attack. They accused the military, which claimed the building housed Hamas military intelligence, of trying to censor coverage of Israel's relentless offensive against Hamas militants.

Ahead of the demolition, the AP placed urgent calls to the Israeli military, foreign minister and prime minister's office but were either ignored or told that there was nothing to be done.

For 15 years, the AP's top-floor office and roof terrace were a prime location for covering Israel's conflicts with Gaza's Hamas rulers, including wars in 2009, 2012 and 2014. The news agency's camera offered 24-hour live shots as militants' rockets arched toward Israel and Israeli airstrikes hammered the city and its surrounding area this week.

"We have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said in a statement. "This is something we actively check to the best of our ability. We would

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never knowingly put our journalists at risk.”

Pruitt described the news agency as “shocked and horrified that the Israeli military would target and destroy the building housing AP’s bureau and other news organizations in Gaza.” He warned: “The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today.”

“This is an incredibly disturbing development. We narrowly avoided a terrible loss of life,” he said, adding that the AP was seeking information from the Israeli government and was in touch with the U.S. State Department.

The building housed a number of offices, including those of the Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera. Dozens of residents who lived in apartments on the upper floors were displaced.

A video broadcast by Al-Jazeera showed the building’s owner, Jawwad Mahdi, pleading over the phone with an Israeli intelligence officer to wait 10 minutes to allow journalists to go inside the building to retrieve valuable equipment before it is bombed.

“All I’m asking is to let four people ... to go inside and get their cameras,” he said. “We respect your wishes, we will not do it if you don’t allow it, but give us 10 minutes.” When the officer rejected the request, Mahdi said, “You have destroyed our life’s work, memories, life. I will hang up, do what you want. There is a God.”

Late Saturday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the building was used by Hamas military intelligence. “It was not an innocent building,” he said.

Israel routinely cites a Hamas presence as a reason for targeting buildings. It also accused the group of using journalists as human shields.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, refused to provide evidence backing up the army’s claims, saying it would compromise intelligence efforts. “I think it’s a legitimate request to see more information, and I will try to provide it,” he said.

Conricus said the army is “committed both to journalists, their safety and to their free work.”

For AP journalists, it was a difficult moment. Most of the AP staff has been sleeping in the bureau, which includes four bedrooms in an upstairs apartment, throughout the current round of fighting, believing that the offices of an international news agency were one of the few safe places in Gaza. In a territory crippled by an Israeli-Egyptian blockade, it was equipped with a generator that offered the rare comforts of electricity, air conditioning and running water.

AP correspondent Fares Akram said he was resting in an upstairs room when he heard panicked screams from colleagues about the evacuation order. Staffers hastily gathered basic equipment, including laptops and cameras before fleeing downstairs.

“I am heartbroken,” Akram said. “You feel like you are at home. Above all, you have your memories, your friends. You spend most of your time there.”

Al-Jazeera, the news network funded by Qatar’s government, broadcast the airstrikes live as the building collapsed.

“This channel will not be silenced. Al-Jazeera will not be silenced,” Halla Mohieddeen, on-air anchorperson for Al-Jazeera English said, her voice thick with emotion. “We can guarantee you that right now.”

Early Sunday, Hamas fired a heavy barrage of rockets at the metropolis of Tel Aviv, saying it was revenge for flattening the high-rise building.

President Joe Biden spoke to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the spiraling violence.

“He raised concerns about the safety and security of journalists and reinforced the need to ensure their protection,” the White House said.

Later Saturday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Pruitt, AP’s president, to express concern about the incident. The State Department said Blinken offered his support for independent journalists and noted the “indispensability” of their reporting in conflict zones. He also expressed relief that the AP team in Gaza was safe.

The Foreign Press Association, which represents some 400 journalists working for international media organizations in Israel and the Palestinian territories, expressed its “grave concern and dismay” over the attack.

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"Knowingly causing the destruction of the offices of some of the world's largest and most influential news organizations raises deeply worrying questions about Israel's willingness to interfere with the freedom of the press," it said. "The safety of other news bureaus in Gaza is now in question."

Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said the attack raises concerns that Israel is targeting the media "to disrupt coverage of the human suffering in Gaza." He demanded "detailed and documented justification" for the attack.

The International Press Institute, a global network of journalists and media executives, condemned the attack as a "gross violation of human rights and internationally agreed norms."

The Israeli military has long had rocky relations with the foreign media, accusing international journalists of being biased against it.

The attack came a day after the Israeli military had fed vague — and in some cases erroneous — information to the media about a possible ground incursion into Gaza. It turned out that there was no ground invasion, and the statement was part of an elaborate ruse aimed at tricking Hamas militants into defensive underground positions that were then destroyed in Israeli airstrikes.

International journalists have accused the army of duping them and turning them into accessories for a military operation. The army said the error was an honest mistake.

Israel strikes Gaza home of Hamas leader, destroys AP office

By FARES AKRAM and LEE KEATH Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel slammed the Gaza Strip with airstrikes, in a dramatic escalation that included bombing the home of a senior Hamas leader, killing a family of 10 in a refugee camp — most of them children — and pulverizing a high-rise that housed The Associated Press and other media.

The Hamas militant group continued a stream of rocket volleys into Israel, including a late-night barrage on Tel Aviv. One man was killed Saturday when a rocket hit his home in a suburb of the seaside metropolis.

With a U.S. envoy on the ground, calls increased for a cease-fire after five days of mayhem that have left at least 145 Palestinians dead in Gaza — including 41 children and 23 women — and eight dead on the Israeli side, all but one of them civilians, including a 5-year-old. President Joe Biden, who has called for a de-escalation but has backed Israel's campaign, spoke separately by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Still, Israel stepped up its assault, vowing to shatter the capabilities of Gaza's Hamas rulers. The week of deadly violence, set off by a Hamas rocket Monday, came after weeks of mounting tensions and heavy-handed Israeli measures in contested Jerusalem.

Early Sunday, Israeli warplanes struck several buildings and roads in a vital part of Gaza City. Photos circulated by residents and journalists showed the airstrikes created a crater that blocked one of the main roads leading to Shifa, the largest hospital in the strip.

The Health Ministry said the latest airstrikes left at least two dead and 25 wounded, including children and women. There has been no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

On Saturday, Israel bombed the home of Khalil al-Hayeh, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch, saying the building served as part of the group's "terrorist infrastructure." There was no immediate report on al-Hayeh's fate or on any casualties.

The bombing of al-Hayeh's home showed Israel was expanding its campaign beyond just the group's military commanders. Israel says it has killed dozens in Hamas' military branch, though Hamas and the smaller group Islamic Jihad have only acknowledged 20 dead members.

Since the conflict began, Israel has leveled a number of Gaza City's tallest office and residential buildings, alleging they house elements of the Hamas military infrastructure. On Saturday, it turned to the 12-story al-Jalaa Building, where the offices of the AP, the TV network Al-Jazeera and other media outlets are located, along with several floors of apartments.

"The campaign will continue as long as it is required," Netanyahu said in a televised speech on Saturday evening. He alleged that Hamas military intelligence was operating inside the building. Israel routinely cites

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a Hamas presence as a reason for targeting certain locations in airstrikes, including residential buildings. The military also has accused the militant group of using journalists as human shields, but provided no evidence to back up the claims.

The AP has operated from the building for 15 years, including through three previous wars between Israel and Hamas, without being targeted directly. During those conflicts as well as the current one, the news agency's cameras from its top floor office and roof terrace offered 24-hour live shots as militants' rockets arched toward Israel and Israeli airstrikes hammered the city and its surroundings.

"We have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said in a statement. "This is something we actively check to the best of our ability. We would never knowingly put our journalists at risk."

In the afternoon, the military called the building's owner and warned a strike would come within an hour. AP staffers and other occupants evacuated safely.

Soon after, three missiles hit the building and destroyed it, bringing it crashing down in a giant cloud of dust.

"The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today," Pruitt said. "We are shocked and horrified that the Israeli military would target and destroy the building housing AP's bureau and other news organizations in Gaza."

"This is an incredibly disturbing development. We narrowly avoided a terrible loss of life," he said, adding that the AP was seeking information from the Israeli government and was engaged with the U.S. State Department to learn more.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken later spoke by phone with Pruitt, offering "his unwavering support for independent journalists and media organizations around the world and noted the indispensability of their reporting in conflict zones," according to a statement.

Mostefa Souag, acting director-general of Al-Jazeera Media Network, called the strike a "war crime" aiming to "silence the media and to hide the untold carnage and suffering of the people of Gaza."

Later in the day, White House press secretary Jen Psaki tweeted that the U.S. had "communicated directly to the Israelis that ensuring the safety and security of journalists and independent media is a paramount responsibility."

In the early hours Saturday, another airstrike hit an apartment building in Gaza City's densely populated Shati refugee camp, killing two women and eight children.

Mohammed Hadidi told reporters that his wife and her brother's wife had gathered at the house with their children to celebrate the Eid al-Fitr holiday ending the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The only survivor was Hadidi's 5-month-old son, Omar.

The blast left the children's bedroom covered in rubble and smashed the salon. Amid the wreckage were children's toys, a Monopoly board game and, sitting on the kitchen counter, unfinished plates of food from the holiday gathering.

"There was no warning ... You filmed people eating and then you bombed them?" a neighbor, Jamal Al-Naji, said, referring to Israel's surveillance over the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In his call with Netanyahu, Biden expressed his "strong support" for Israel's campaign but raised concern about civilian casualties and protection of journalists, the White House said.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin tweeted Saturday that he had spoken again with Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz and reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself and condemned "Hamas' deliberate targeting of Israeli citizens." Austin added: "I also expressed my hope that calm can be restored soon."

The bombings took place a day after U.S. diplomat Hady Amr arrived in Israel as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict. Israel turned down an Egyptian proposal for a one-year truce that Hamas rulers had accepted, an Egyptian intelligence official said Friday on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

Mediators from Egypt, which works closely with Israel on security issues and shares a border with the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, appeared to be growing alarmed. The intelligence official said Egypt hopes the

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U.S. intervention could halt the Israeli assault. The U.N. Security Council was set to meet Sunday.

The tensions began in east Jerusalem earlier this month, when Palestinians protested attempts by settlers to forcibly evict a number of Palestinian families from their homes and Israeli police measures at Al-Aqsa Mosque, a frequent flashpoint located on a mount in the Old City revered by Muslims and Jews.

Hamas fired rockets toward Jerusalem late Monday, triggering the Israeli assault on Gaza. Since then, Hamas has fired more than 2,000 rockets, though most have either fallen short or been intercepted by anti-missile defenses. Israel's warplanes and artillery have struck hundreds of targets around blockaded Gaza, where some 2 million Palestinians live.

The turmoil has also spilled over elsewhere, fueling protests in the occupied West Bank and stoking violence within Israel between its Jewish and Arab citizens, with clashes and vigilante attacks on people and property.

Palestinians on Saturday marked the Day of al-Nakba, or "the Catastrophe," commemorating the estimated 700,000 people who were expelled from or fled their homes in what was now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. Thousands of Arab Israelis marched in a Nakba rally in the northern Israeli city of Sukhnin, and scattered protests took place in the West Bank.

Palestinian health officials reported the deaths of two Palestinians by Israeli fire in the West Bank on Saturday. One of the shootings occurred when the army said it thwarted an alleged car ramming.

Protesters in major US cities decry airstrikes over Gaza

Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets of Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta and other U.S. cities on Saturday to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of people shut down traffic on a major thoroughfare in west Los Angeles as they marched two miles from outside the federal building to the Israeli consulate. The protesters waved signs that said "free Palestine" and shouted "long live intifada," or uprising.

A protest that started in a neighborhood in the Bay Ridge neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, which has a large Arabic-speaking community, continued through the streets for several hours on Saturday afternoon. Footage on social media showed people had climbed up the poles of street lights to wave flags while others set off fireworks. As the sun set, some protesters walked onto the Interstate 278 shutting down traffic in at least one direction, according to video posted online.

Bella Hadid, a well-known Palestinian-American model, participated in the Brooklyn protest.

The marches coincided with Nakba Day, which commemorates the 1948 displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians amid Israel's declaration of independence.

In Atlanta, hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators, including grandparents, teenagers and mothers and fathers with youngsters in tow, assembled downtown to wave signs and chant slogans, the Atlanta Journal Constitution reported.

One sign read, "We can't breathe since 1948" — a nod to the racial injustice and police brutality protests in the U.S. during the past year in the wake of George Floyd's death in police custody after he couldn't breathe, the newspaper reported.

In San Francisco, a raucous crowd banged drums and yelled "Palestine will be free" as they marched across the Mission district to Dolores Park.

A similar scene played out in Boston as protesters walked a short distance from Copley Square to the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters unfurl a banner in the colors of the Palestinian flag with the words "Free Palestine" while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located.

In Washington, thousands of protesters streamed from the Washington Monument and to the National Archives. In Philadelphia, demonstrators filled Rittenhouse Square to decry U.S. support for Israel.

At a protest in Pittsburgh, one speaker called on lawmakers to put restrictions on how Israel can spend aid from the United States.

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The protests were stoked by five days of mayhem that left at least 145 Palestinians dead in Gaza and eight dead on the Israeli side. The violence, set off by Hamas firing a rocket into Israel on Monday, came after weeks of mounting tensions and heavy-handed Israeli measures in contested Jerusalem.

Israel stepped up its assault and slammed the Gaza Strip with airstrikes Saturday, in a dramatic escalation that included bombing the home of a senior Hamas leader, killing a family of 10 in a refugee camp and destroying a building that house the offices of The Associated Press and other media.

Republican Arizona election official says Trump “unhinged”

By BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The Republican who now leads the Arizona county elections department targeted by a GOP audit of the 2020 election results is slamming former President Donald Trump and others in his party for their continued falsehoods about how the election was run.

Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer on Saturday called a Trump statement accusing the county of deleting an elections database “unhinged” and called on other Republicans to stop the unfounded accusations.

“We can’t indulge these insane lies any longer. As a party. As a state. As a country,” Richer tweeted.

Richer became recorder in January, after defeating the Democratic incumbent.

The former president’s statement came as Republican Senate President Karen Fann has demanded the Republican-dominated Maricopa County Board of Supervisors come to the Senate to answer questions raised by the private auditors she has hired. The Senate took possession of 2.1 million ballots and election equipment last month for what was supposed to be a three-week hand recount of the presidential race won by Democratic President Joe Biden.

Instead, the auditors have moved as a snail’s pace and had to shut down Thursday after counting about 500,000 ballots. They plan to resume counting in a week, after high school graduation ceremonies planned for the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, which they rented for the recount.

Trump’s statement said, in part, that “the entire Database of Maricopa County in Arizona has been DELETED! This is illegal and the Arizona State Senate, who is leading the Forensic Audit, is up in arms.”

Richer and the board say that statement is just plain wrong. In recent days, both he and the board have begun aggressively pushing back at what they see as continuing falsehoods from Republicans who question Trump’s loss.

“Enough with the defamation. Enough with the unfounded allegations,” Richer tweeted Thursday. “I came to this office to competently, fairly, and lawfully administer the duties of the office. Not to be accused by own party of shredding ballots and deleting files for an election I didn’t run. Enough.”

The board, led by Republican Chairman Jack Sellers, have been aggressively using Twitter in recent days to push back, firing off a series of messages slamming the private company doing the audit. The board plans to hold a public hearing Monday to further to refute lies and lay out facts about these issues.”

“I know you all have grown weary of lies and half-truths six months after 2020 General Elections,” Sellers said Friday in announcing Monday’s meeting.

Fann sent Sellers a letter on Wednesday requesting that county officials publicly answer questions at the Senate on Tuesday, but she stopped short of her threat to issue subpoenas.

Fann repeated the Senate’s demand for access to administrative passwords for vote-counting machines and internet routers. County officials say they have turned over all the passwords they have and have refused to give up the routers, saying it would compromise sensitive data, including classified law enforcement information held by the sheriff’s office.

Fann proposed allowing its contractor to view data from the routers at county facilities under supervision of the sheriff’s office. “The Senate has no interest in viewing or taking possession of any information that is unrelated to the administration of the 2020 general election,” she wrote.

The county says the passwords the Senate is seeking are maintained by Dominion Voting Systems Inc., which makes the vote-counting machines and leases them to the county. The company said in a state-

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ment Thursday that it cooperates with auditors certified by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, and did so for two prior audits of 2020 results in Maricopa County, but won't work with Cyber Ninjas.

Fann has hired Cyber Ninjas, a Florida-based cybersecurity firm, to oversee an unprecedented, partisan review of the 2020 election in Arizona's largest county. They are conducting a hand recount of all 2.1 million ballots and looking into baseless conspiracy theories suggesting there were problems with the election, which have grown popular with supporters of Trump.

DIARY: Shouts, a hurried evacuation, and then the bombs came

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — My colleagues' shouts awakened me, and the pounding of my heart drowned out the racing of my mind. What was happening? Had someone been injured on the streets of Gaza City, or worse?

It was 1:55 p.m. on Saturday. I had been napping on the upper floor of the two-floor penthouse that served as The Associated Press' offices in Gaza City since 2006. This was not unusual in recent days; since fighting began earlier this month, I had been sleeping in our news bureau until early afternoon, then working through the night.

I hurried downstairs and saw my colleagues donning helmets and protective vests. They were shouting: "Evacuation! Evacuation!"

The Israeli military, I would learn later, had targeted our building for destruction and offered up a brief advance warning: They had taken out three buildings so far this week, warning residents and occupants sometimes minutes beforehand to get out. Hurriedly, I was told: You have 10 minutes.

What did I need? I grabbed my laptop and a few other pieces of electronics. What else? I looked at the workspace that had been mine for years, brimming with mementos from friends, family and colleagues. I chose just a handful: a decorative plate bearing a picture of my family. A coffee mug given me by my daughter, now living safely in Canada with her sister and my wife since 2017. A certificate marking five years of employment at AP.

I started to leave. Then I looked back at this place that had been my second home for years. I realized this was the last time I might ever see it. It was just after 2 p.m. I looked around. I was the last person there.

I put on my helmet. And I ran.

After the most unsettling of days in the community where I was born and raised and now cover the news — in the place where my mother and siblings and cousins and uncles live — I am home now. I wish I could say I am safe here, but I can't. In Gaza, there is no safe place.

On Friday, an airstrike destroyed my family farm on the northern edge of Gaza. And now, my Gaza City office — the place that I thought was sacrosanct and would go untargeted because both AP and al-Jazeera's offices were located on its top floors — is a pile of rubble and girders and dust.

Many Gazans have fared worse. At least 145 of us have been killed since Monday, when Hamas began firing hundreds of rockets into Israel, which has pounded the Gaza Strip with strikes. In Israel, eight people have been killed, including a man killed by a rocket that hit in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv, on Saturday.

In our building, the clock in my head felt deafening as I ran out of the office. I ran down the 11 floors of stairs and into the basement parking garage. Suddenly I realized: My car was the only one there. All others had evacuated. I threw my belongings in the back, jumped in and drove off.

When I felt I was far enough away, I parked the car and got out, making sure I had a view of my building. I found my colleagues nearby. They were watching, waiting for what was next.

Nearby, our building's owner was on the phone with the Israeli military officer who had told him to get the place evacuated. The owner was begging for a bit more time. No, he was told. That won't be possible. Instead, he was told: Go back into the building and make sure everyone's out. You have 10 minutes. You'd better hurry.

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I turned toward our building to watch. I was praying that maybe, maybe it wouldn't happen. I thought of the families that lived on the upper five floors of the building, below the media bureaus and above the offices on the lower floors. What would they do? Where would they go?

Other journalists clustered around, just at the edge of safety, steeled for what was next. My intrepid video colleagues tended to their live shot.

Then, in quick succession over the next eight minutes: a small drone airstrike, followed by another and another. And then three powerful airstrikes from F-16s.

At first, it looked like layers of something collapsing. I thought of a bowl of potato chips, and what might happen if you slammed a fist into them. Then the smoke and dust enveloped everything. The sky rumbled. And the building that was home to some people, an office to others and both to me disappeared in a shroud of dust.

In my pocket, I still had a key to a room that no longer existed.

Standing with my colleagues about 400 meters (yards) away, I watched for a while and tried to process it all as the rubble started to settle. White smoke was overtaken by thick clouds of black smoke as the structure crumbled. Dust and pieces of cement and shards of glass scattered everywhere. What we knew so well was gone.

I thought of all of my hundreds of mementos that were now in splinters — including the 20-year-old cassette recorder I used when I first became a journalist. If I had had an hour, I would have grabbed everything.

It was one of the most horrible scenes I have ever witnessed. But while I was deeply sad, there was gratitude, too — as far as I knew, no people had been hurt — neither any of my colleagues nor anybody else. That would be confirmed in the coming hours, as more information came out and my bosses at AP condemned an attack that "shocked and horrified" them.

I wondered how long I should stay and watch. It was then that my years of instinct kicked in — the instinct of covering so much violence and sadness in the place that is my home.

Our building was gone and would not be coming back. Already, other things were happening that I needed to cover. You must realize: We journalists, we are not the story. The priority for us is not ourselves. It is to tell the stories of other people, those who are living their lives in the communities we cover.

So I spent a few more moments watching the end of the place that shaped so much of my life. And then I began to wake up from this nightmare.

I said to myself: It has been done. Now let's figure out what to do next. Let's keep covering it all. This is history, and there are more stories to tell. And like always, as the world shakes around us, it is up to us to figure out how.

Rombauer pulls Preakness upset, Baffert's Medina Spirit 3rd

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — Rombauer left Medina Spirit behind — and put horse racing's latest controversy on the back burner.

Little-known Rombauer sprung an 11-1 upset to win the Preakness on Saturday, passing Bob Baffert's Kentucky Derby winner to end a potential Triple Crown bid that would have carried a giant asterisk.

Medina Spirit finished third and will not go on to the Belmont with a Triple Crown on the line and a potential Derby disqualification hanging over the sport.

"A little disappointed, but we'll go on from here," said assistant trainer Jimmy Barnes, who saddled the horses in Baffert's absence.

Baffert was not present at Pimlico Race Course, opting to stay away because of the controversy surrounding Medina Spirit, who tested positive for the steroid betamethasone in post-Derby testing. He said in a spotlight-stealing statement hours before the race: "Today is not about Bob Baffert. Instead it is about Medina Spirit and all of the other equine athletes in our tremendous sport."

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All the focus nonetheless was on 2-1 favorite Medina Spirit, Baffert and his other Preakness runner, Concert Tour, who went off at 4-1. Medina Spirit was passed for the first time in his career by Rombauer, who won by 3 1/2 lengths over second-place Midnight Bourbon.

"I had to come out running to get my position," said Medina Spirit jockey John Velazquez, who fell to 0 for 11 in the Preakness. "I knew that he was going to be pressed today. I was hoping that he wouldn't overdo it, and we did."

Concert Tour was a disappointing ninth in a 10-horse field.

"I am at a loss for words," said Concert Tour jockey Mike Smith, who left Midnight Bourbon after the Derby to ride Baffert's other Preakness horse. "He just wasn't going anywhere."

Maryland racing officials required Concert Tour and Medina Spirit to undergo additional testing and monitoring as conditions to run in the Preakness. Those three rounds of tests came back Friday, clearing them to race. None of the other horses were subject to that level of scrutiny, which came out of the situation at Churchill Downs and Baffert's four other medication violations over the past 13 months with other horses.

That was set aside for at least the 1:53.62 it took for Rombauer to complete the 1 3/16-mile race, paying \$26.50 to win, \$10 to place and \$5.20 to show.

"He broke as expected and I thought he put enough pressure on Medina Spirit to make it a horse race and then he ended up second," Midnight Bourbon trainer Steve Asmussen said. "He showed up. He's improving. And he's not there yet, all at the same time."

Midnight Bourbon was sixth in the Kentucky Derby behind Medina Spirit, whose victory still hangs in the balance with a second test yet to be analyzed. It's unclear how long that will take.

Trainer Michael McCarthy won a Triple Crown race for the first time and captured the Preakness before Hall of Famer Todd Pletcher, for whom he worked as an assistant before opening his own barn. Pletcher gave McCarthy a bear hug after the race.

Rombauer is owned by John and Diane Fradkin, a far cry from Medina Spirit's Zedan Racing Stables and other horse racing conglomerates. He won for the third time in seven starts.

McCarthy choked back tears while talking about everyone involved with Rombauer.

"Means a lot to be here, participate on a day like this," he said. "Happy for the Fradkins. Just goes to show you that small players in the game can be successful, as well."

Rombauer busted the bias of horses hugging the rail on the dirt at Pimlico Race Course all day, going past Midnight Bourbon and Medina Spirit down the stretch and winning by 3 1/2 lengths.

Jockey Flavien Prat won the Preakness two years after being elevated to the Derby winner aboard Country House when Maximum Security was disqualified.

"Of course it's a lot different when you cross the wire first: You get that feeling," Prat said. "It's a lot of joy."

With the usual joy replaced by chatter about Baffert and medication violations, the Preakness was run in front of a limited capacity of 10,000 fans, a fraction of the crowd of 100,000-plus that typically packs Pimlico on the third Saturday in May. Masks were still required because of city and track protocols.

This was a short turnaround from the 2020 Preakness, which was run last fall as the third leg of the Triple Crown with no fans allowed.

Crash victim had posted videos riding in Tesla on Autopilot

By DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The driver of a Tesla involved in a fatal crash that California highway authorities said may have been on operating on Autopilot posted social media videos of himself riding in the vehicle without his hands on the wheel or foot on the pedal.

The May 5 crash in Fontana, a city 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, is also under investigation by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The probe is the 29th case involving a Tesla that the federal agency has probed.

In the Fontana crash, a 35-year-old man identified as Steven Michael Hendrickson was killed when his

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Tesla Model 3 struck an overturned semi on a freeway about 2:30 a.m.

Hendrickson was member of the Southern California chapter of a Tesla club who posted numerous photos and video on social media of his white Model 3. One video on his Instagram account showed him riding in the driver's seat without his hands on the wheel or foot on the pedal as the Tesla navigated freeway traffic. The video included the comment: "Best carpool buddy possible even takes the boring traffic for me."

A GoFundMe page set up to raise money for his funeral and memorial service says Hendrickson was survived by his wife and two children. A message seeking comment from his wife has not been returned.

"Every time we spoke to him, he would light up talking about his kids and loved his Tesla," Tesla Club-SoCal posted on Instagram. "He was truly an amazing human being and will be missed!"

Another man was seriously injured when the electric vehicle hit him as he was helping the semi's driver out of the wreck.

The CHP announced Thursday that its preliminary investigation had determined that the Tesla's partially automated driving system called Autopilot "was engaged" prior to the crash. The agency said it was commenting on the Fontana crash because of the "high level of interest" about Tesla crashes and because it was "an opportunity to remind the public that driving is a complex task that requires a driver's full attention."

However on Friday, the agency walked back its previous declaration.

"To clarify," a new CHP statement said, "There has not been a final determination made as to what driving mode the Tesla was in or if it was a contributing factor to the crash."

At least three people have died in previous U.S. crashes involving Autopilot, which can keep a car centered in its lane and a safe distance behind vehicles in front of it. Tesla is allowing a limited number of owners to test its self-driving system.

Tesla, which has disbanded its public relations department, did not respond Friday to an email seeking comment. The company says in owner's manuals and on its website that both Autopilot and "Full Self-Driving" are not fully autonomous and that drivers must pay attention and be ready to intervene at any time.

Autopilot at times has had trouble dealing with stationary objects and traffic crossing in front of Teslas.

In two Florida crashes, from 2016 and 2019, cars with Autopilot in use drove beneath crossing tractor-trailers, killing the men driving the Teslas. In a 2018 crash in Mountain View, California, an Apple engineer driving on Autopilot was killed when his Tesla struck a highway barrier.

Tesla's system, which uses cameras, radar and short-range sonar, also has trouble handling stopped emergency vehicles. Teslas have struck several firetrucks and police vehicles that were stopped on freeways with their flashing emergency lights on.

After the Florida and California fatal crashes, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that Tesla develop a stronger system to ensure drivers are paying attention, and that it limit use of Autopilot to highways where it can work effectively. Neither Tesla nor the safety agency took action.

In a Feb. 1 letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation, NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt urged the department to enact regulations governing driver-assist systems such as Autopilot, as well as testing of autonomous vehicles. NHTSA has relied mainly on voluntary guidelines for the vehicles, taking a hands-off approach so it won't hinder development of new safety technology.

Sumwalt said that Tesla is using people who have bought the cars to test "Full Self-Driving" software on public roads with limited oversight or reporting requirements.

"Because NHTSA has put in place no requirements, manufacturers can operate and test vehicles virtually anywhere, even if the location exceeds the AV (autonomous vehicle) control system's limitations," Sumwalt wrote.

He added: "Although Tesla includes a disclaimer that 'currently enabled features require active driver supervision and do not make the vehicle autonomous,' NHTSA's hands-off approach to oversight of AV testing poses a potential risk to motorists and other road users."

NHTSA, which has authority to regulate automated driving systems and seek recalls if necessary, seems to have developed a renewed interest in the systems since President Joe Biden took office.

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'Sins of our past': Apologies for 1970 Jackson St. shootings

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The mayor of Mississippi's capital city and a state senator both apologized Saturday for shootings 51 years ago by city and state police officers that killed two people and injured 12 others on the campus of a historically Black college.

Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba and state Sen. Hillman Frazier of Jackson spoke during a graduation ceremony for the Class of 1970 of what was then Jackson State College, now Jackson State University.

Lumumba apologized on behalf of the city to the families of the two men whose lives were cut short by the violent police response to the protest against racial injustice. Killed were 21-year-old Jackson State student Phillip Lafayette Gibbs and 17-year-old James Earl Green, a high school student who was on campus while walking home from work.

Jackson State's 1970 commencement was canceled because of the bloodshed, and graduates that year received their diplomas in the mail, if at all. On Saturday, 74 of the 400-plus 1970 grads donned caps and gowns and stood in the sunshine to receive the recognition denied to them a lifetime ago.

"As James Baldwin once wrote: 'When we cannot tell the truth about our past, we become trapped in it,'" Lumumba said. "I believe, as a city, we must publicly atone for the sins of our past and proclaim a new identity of dignity, equity and justice."

The May 15, 1970, shootings at Jackson State had largely been overshadowed by violence from days earlier, when Ohio National Guardsmen shot and killed four Kent State University students amid a Vietnam War protest.

Lumumba and Frazier are both Black, and both represent a city now more than 80% Black. Jackson was majority-white in 1970, and the Jackson Police Department and Mississippi Highway Patrol officers who went on campus were white.

Lumumba said the Jackson Police Department officers "unjustly gunned down two innocent young Black men, terrorized and traumatized a community of Black students and committed one of the gravest sins in our city's history."

Frazier was a Jackson State student in 1970. He said he had gone to dinner that night and was delayed in returning to campus. But he believes he might have been standing near his friend Gibbs during the gunfire, if not for that delay.

"The state of Mississippi never apologized for the tragedy that occurred on this campus that night — never apologized," Frazier said. "So, since I'm here representing the state of Mississippi in my role as state senator, I'd like to issue an apology to the families, the Jackson State family, for the tragedy that occurred that night because they took very valuable lives."

Officers marched onto Jackson State the night of May 14, 1970, to quell protests against racial injustice. According to a report by President Richard Nixon's Commission on Campus Unrest, Jackson State students had been throwing rocks at white motorists. James "Lap" Baker, a member of the Class of 1970, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that students were fed up with white people driving through campus shouting racial slurs, throwing bottles and endangering Black pedestrians.

Students had gathered outside the Alexander Hall women's dormitory and B.F. Roberts dining hall across the street — some protesting, others simply enjoying each other's company as women returned to the dorm before curfew.

After midnight that May 15, a Highway Patrol officer used a bullhorn to address students, Baker said. Someone in the crowd threw a bottle, and officers started shooting indiscriminately, later falsely claiming they had seen a sniper in a dorm window.

A Jackson TV reporter recorded 28 seconds of gunfire. When it had ended, Gibbs and Green were dead and 12 other people were bleeding. Windows of Alexander Hall shattered and its walls were left with pockmarks still visible today.

John A. Peoples Jr., who was Jackson State president from 1967 to 1984, said during Saturday's ceremony that he remembers "the sickening smell of blood" streaming down the stairway of Alexander Hall

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after the shootings.

"We sat on that lawn the rest of the night singing freedom songs," Peoples said.

Baker crawled through grass after the shootings to return unharmed to his off-campus apartment after what he calls a planned "massacre." No officer ever faced criminal charges, and an all-white jury awarded no money to the Black victims' families in a civil lawsuit.

Jackson State on Saturday awarded posthumous honorary doctorate degrees to Gibbs and Green, and their sisters accepted those. The graduation took place on the site of the once-busy street that was closed years ago and turned into a pedestrian zone named the Gibbs-Green Memorial Plaza.

NYC Pride parade bans police; Gay officers 'disheartened'

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Organizers of New York City's Pride events said Saturday they are banning police and other law enforcement from marching in their huge annual parade until at least 2025 and will also seek to keep on-duty officers a block away from the celebration of LGBTQ people and history.

In their statement, NYC Pride urged members of law enforcement to "acknowledge their harm and to correct course moving forward."

"The sense of safety that law enforcement is meant to provide can instead be threatening, and at times dangerous, to those in our community who are most often targeted with excessive force and/or without reason," the group said.

It will also increase the event's security budget to boost the presence of community-based security and first responders while reducing the police department's presence.

Police will provide first response and security "only when absolutely necessary as mandated by city officials," the group said, adding it hoped to keep police officers at least one city block away from event perimeter areas where possible.

Word of the ban came out Friday when the Gay Officers Action League said in a release it was disheartened by the decision.

The group called the ban an "abrupt about-face" and said the decision "to placate some of the activists in our community is shameful."

The parade is scheduled for June after the coronavirus prevented many Pride events worldwide last year, including in New York which instead hosted virtual performances in front of masked participants and honored front-line workers in the pandemic crisis.

The disruptions frustrated activists who had hoped to collectively mark the 50th anniversary of the first Gay Pride parades and marches in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco in 1970.

Those marches came a year after the 1969 uprising outside Manhattan's Stonewall Inn, a gay bar, in response to a police raid. The uprising is largely credited with fueling the modern LGBTQ rights movement.

Pride season occurs this year amid activism inspired by the response to racial injustice and police brutality in the wake of George Floyd's death last year at the hands of police in Minneapolis.

Pride NYC's announcement Saturday follows a division among organizers in recent years in planning for celebrations of LGBTQ pride in New York City.

In 2019, there were two marches in Manhattan after some in the community concluded that the annual parade had become too commercialized. The Queer Liberation March aimed for a protest vibe, saying the main Pride march was too heavily policed by the same department that raided Stonewall a half century earlier.

The New York Police Department commissioner apologized for the raid during a briefing in 2019, calling it "wrong, plain and simple."

Detective Sophia Mason, a spokesperson for the New York Police Department, said on Saturday the department's "annual work to ensure a safe, enjoyable Pride season has been increasingly embraced by its participants."

She added: "The idea of officers being excluded is disheartening and runs counter to our shared values

of inclusion and tolerance. That said, we'll still be there to ensure traffic safety and good order during this huge, complex event."

Pandemic triggers new crisis in Peru: lack of cemetery space

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — After Joel Bautista died of a heart attack last month in Peru, his family tried unsuccessfully to find an available grave at four different cemeteries. After four days, they resorted to digging a hole in his garden.

The excavation in a poor neighborhood in the capital city of Lima was broadcast live on television, attracting the attention of authorities and prompting them to offer the family a space on the rocky slopes of a cemetery.

"If there is no solution, then there will be a space here," Yeni Bautista told The Associated Press, explaining the family's decision to dig at the foot of a tropical hibiscus tree after her brother's body began to decompose.

The same plight is shared by other families across Peru. After struggling to control the coronavirus pandemic for more than a year, the country now faces a parallel crisis: a lack of cemetery space. The problem affects everyone, not just relatives of COVID-19 victims, and some families have acted on their own, digging clandestine graves in areas surrounding some of Lima's 65 cemeteries.

The desperate lack of options comes as the country endures its deadliest period of the pandemic yet. More than 64,300 people who tested positive for COVID-19 have died in Peru, according to the Health Ministry, but that figure is almost certainly an undercount. A vital records agency estimates that the true figure is more than 174,900, counting those whose possible infection was not confirmed by a test.

As recently as April, an infected person died every four minutes at home or in a hospital, and hospital space has been so scarce that Peruvians have read on social media about families offering kidneys, cars or land in exchange for one of the country's 2,785 intensive care beds.

Even when cemetery space can be found, burials pose a huge financial burden, especially for families who have fallen into poverty because of COVID-19. The cost of a burial in a cemetery on the edge of Lima is nearly \$1,200, almost five times the monthly minimum wage of \$244.

Retired merchant Victor Coba took matters into his own hands, building graves for himself, his wife and four other relatives in a narrow space in a cemetery at the foot of a treeless hill in the north of Lima.

Coba, 72, carried bricks, sand and cement to the site, where with help from a friend he began constructing his "eternal home." He and his wife decided to act after watching the news and learning that two dozen neighbors died of COVID-19.

"You feel quite worried when there is nowhere to take them, and there are no pennies with which to bury them," Coba said.

Many of Peru's sprawling cemeteries have grown with no development plans or government approval. They lack walls or fences and are adjacent to irregular settlements, making it nearly impossible at times to determine where they end and where the impoverished communities begin. Graves are now encroaching on the settlements.

Of Lima's 65 cemeteries, only 20 have a health license. One on a hidden hill has been operating for 24 years and does not require any paperwork for burials, which cost \$361.

"Many cemeteries are in a state of collapse," said Martín Anampa, an official from Carabayllo, the oldest municipality in Lima. "We are living the outcome of a bad planning process that they have had throughout history."

Juan Bañez, 51, the father of two children, died of COVID-19 after waiting for an ICU bed. His cousin, Felix Albornoz, and other friends recently carried his coffin through a graveyard on a dusty hill to bury him in a recently expanded area of the cemetery.

"In the outskirts of Lima, in the poor areas, people come to bury themselves in the hills," Albornoz said. "There is no support. The government has abandoned us."

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Back in the Virgen de Fátima neighborhood, in the far east end of Lima, Joel Bautista died May 1 at the age of 45. He lost his eyesight by the time he finished middle school because of a congenital condition. He was unemployed but helped his sister and nieces around the house, which they all shared.

He was a fan of Mexican rock band Maná. Their song "Corazón Espinado" was played constantly during the wake, which lasted longer than expected because of the struggle to find a place to bury him.

"Everything is at critical point because of this pandemic that we are going through," said Yeni Bautista, 52. "Cemeteries are collapsing due to deaths from COVID, but it does not mean that they are going to deny us a space. I am not asking for a huge area, but a tiny space to bury him."

Pipeline operator says "normal operations" have resumed

ATLANTA (AP) — The operator of the nation's largest gasoline pipeline — hit on May 7th by a ransomware attack — announced Saturday that it has resumed "normal operations," delivering fuel to its markets, including a large swath of the East Coast.

Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline had begun the process of restarting the pipeline's operations on Wednesday evening, warning it could take several days for the supply chain to return to normal.

"Since that time, we have returned the system to normal operations, delivering millions of gallons per hour to the markets we serve," Colonial Pipeline said in a tweet Saturday. Those markets include Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Washington D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

"All of these markets are now receiving product from our pipeline," the company said, noting how its employees across the pipeline "worked safely and tirelessly around the clock to get our lines up and running."

Gas shortages, which spread from the South, all but emptying stations in Washington, D.C., have been improving since a peak on Thursday night. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm told The Associated Press on Friday that the nation is "over the hump" on gas shortages, with about 200 stations returning to service every hour.

"It's still going to work its way through the system over the next few days, but we should be back to normal fairly soon," she said.

Some stations were still out of gas in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Saturday. Driver Jermaine Barnes told CBS17 the shortage has made him more conservative with his trips.

"I'm not going places I don't need to go," he said. "I'm not visiting people. I'm watching where I'm driving. I'm doing everything different right now."

Some drivers responded angrily on Facebook Saturday to a post by ABC-13 in Asheville, North Carolina, about the pipeline resuming normal operations. Several said the majority of gas stations still did not have fuel and those that did receive deliveries were quickly selling out.

Martha Meade, manager for public and government relations at AAA Mid-Atlantic, said many gas stations in the Virginia area still did not have gas on Saturday. But she said "lines have diminished from the height of the crisis" and "panic buying has subsided."

Multiple sources confirmed to The Associated Press that Colonial Pipeline had paid the criminals who committed the cyberattack a ransom of nearly \$5 million in cryptocurrency for the software decryption key required to unscramble their data network.

The ransom — 75 Bitcoin — was paid last Saturday, a day after the criminals locked up Colonial's corporate network, according to Tom Robinson, co-founder of the cryptocurrency-tracking firm Elliptic. Prior to Robinson's blog post, two people briefed on the case had confirmed the payment amount to AP.

The pipeline system delivers about 45% of the gasoline consumed on the East Coast.

UK races to test, vaccinate as virus variant threatens plans

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British health workers, aided by the army, distributed coronavirus tests door-to-door Saturday in two towns in northern England, seeking to contain a fast-spreading variant that threatens

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plans to lift all lockdown restrictions next month.

Cases of a variant first identified in India have more than doubled in a week, defying a sharp nationwide downward trend in infections won by months of restrictions and a rapid vaccination campaign. Government scientific advisers say this variant is likely more transmissible than even the U.K.'s dominant strain, though it's unclear by how much.

"If the virus is significantly more transmissible, we are likely to face some hard choices," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said at a news conference on Friday. "I have to level with you that this could be a serious disruption to our progress."

He said the next stage of lockdown-easing measures would take place as planned on Monday, but warned the variant might delay plans to lift all restrictions, including social distancing and face-covering rules, on June 21.

Johnson said soldiers would help carry out "surge testing" in Bolton and Blackburn in northwest England, where pop-up vaccination sites were also being set up to speed the inoculation drive.

The government's scientific advisory committee says there is no evidence so far that the variant causes more severe disease or that existing vaccines won't work against it. More than two-thirds of British adults have received a first dose of a coronavirus vaccine, and 37% have had both doses.

The government is shortening the gap between doses for people over 50 from 12 to eight weeks in a bid to give them more protection.

The government's Scientific Group for Emergencies says the Indian-identified variant, formally known as B.1.617.2, could be up to 50% more transmissible than one first recorded in southeast England last year that is now the U.K.'s dominant strain. But they say there is a high level of uncertainty about the exact figure.

Mark Walport, a member of the advisory group, said the new variant had "intensified" the race between the virus and vaccines.

"The knife edge on which the race sits has just sharpened," he said.

Britain has recorded almost 128,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest reported toll in Europe. But new infections have plummeted to an average of around 2,000 a day, compared with nearly 70,000 a day during the winter peak, and deaths have fallen to single figures a day.

Restrictions that have curbed travel, commerce and daily life for months are gradually being lifted. Starting Monday, restaurants and pubs in England can open indoors, museums, theaters, cinemas and hotels can reopen, and people can once again hug friends and family members they don't live with.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are following similar but slightly different paths. The Scottish government is keeping the city of Glasgow and the northern area of Moray under restrictions because of rising case numbers there.

Critics said the government should have acted sooner to ban travelers from India, which has been gripped by a devastating coronavirus outbreak.

Labour Party lawmaker Yvette Cooper said the government had not barred visitors arriving from India until April 23, a decision that let in "many hundreds of new variant cases."

"This was predictable but it was not inevitable," she said.

Police fire tear gas on banned Palestinian march in Paris

By ELAINE GANLEY and BOUBKAR BENZABAT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French riot police fired tear gas and used water cannons Saturday in Paris as protesters supporting Palestinians in the Gaza Strip defied a ban on marching in the French capital.

Thousands of people marched peacefully in other cities in France and elsewhere in Europe — including in London, Rome, Brussels and Madrid — to highlight the plight of the Palestinians.

In Paris, protesters scattered and played cat-and-mouse with security forces in the city's northern neighborhoods after their starting point for a planned march was blocked.

Paris Police Chief Didier Lallement had ordered 4,200 security forces into the streets and closed shops around the kick-off point for the march in a working-class neighborhood after an administrative court

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confirmed the ban due to fears of violence. Authorities noted that a banned July 2014 pro-Palestinian protest in Paris against an Israeli offensive in Gaza degenerated into violence to justify the order against Saturday's march.

Organizers sought to "denounce the latest Israeli aggressions" and mark the fleeing of Palestinians after Israel declared independence in 1948. "Stop Annexation. Palestine Will Vanquish," read one poster in a small crowd facing off with police.

Protesters shifted from neighborhood to neighborhood in Paris as police closed in on them, sometimes with tear gas and water cannons, and police said 44 people were arrested. In a lengthy standoff, protesters pelted a line of security forces with projectiles before police pushed them to the edge of northern Paris.

"We don't want scenes of violence. We don't want a conflict imported to French soil," government spokesman Gabriel Attal said.

Anger over the Israeli offensive in Gaza drew protests elsewhere in Europe on Saturday. Thousands marched on the Israeli Embassy in London to protest Israel's attacks, which included an airstrike that flattened a 12-story building in Gaza that housed media outlets, including The Associated Press.

Demonstrators chanting "Free Palestine!" marched through London's Hyde Park and gathered outside the embassy gates, watched by a large number of police. Organizers demanded that the British government stop its military and financial support to Israel.

Husam Zumlot, head of the Palestinian mission to the U.K., told the crowd that "this time is different."

"This time we will not be denied any more. We are united. We have had enough of oppression," he said.

In the Netherlands, a few hundred people in The Hague braved the cold and rain to listen to speeches and wave Palestinian flags on a central square outside the Dutch parliament building. On Friday evening, Dutch police briefly detained about 100 pro-Palestinian demonstrators in the city of Utrecht because they were not social distancing.

In other French cities, large pro-Palestinian crowds marched peacefully Saturday in Strasbourg in the east and Marseille on the Mediterranean Sea. Demonstrations were also held in several German cities and in Brussels, host to the European Union. In Madrid, protesters chanted "This is not war, this is genocide!" in Spanish, with some people holding up homemade signs that read "'USA Terrorist State" and "Muslim Lives Matter."

In Berlin, police broke up a pro-Palestinian protest of 3,500 people for failure to comply with coronavirus distancing rules. Protesters responded by throwing stones, bottles and fireworks.

Bleak futures fuel widespread protests by young Colombians

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BUCARAMANGA, Colombia (AP) — Thousands of young people and college students have been at the forefront of Colombia's antigovernment protests for more than two weeks, armed with improvised shields made from garbage cans and umbrellas.

They have taken the brunt of the tear gas and gunshots from security forces, and dozens have paid for it with their lives.

The young men and women have become the voices for Colombians fed up with a government they say has mismanaged the coronavirus pandemic and crushed hopes of a better future.

"To a large extent, we found that there was no fear of death. Sometimes it is the only thing that remains when the system is starving us and there are no opportunities," said Yonny Rojas, a 36-year-old law student who also runs soup kitchens in one of the poorest areas of Cali, the city where the government response has been especially violent.

The students didn't begin the demonstrations, which erupted on April 28 when unions called people into the streets after President Iván Duque's government tried to raise taxes on public services, fuel, wages and pensions, effectively squeezing the middle class. That protest drew tens of thousands of people across the South American nation.

The administration withdrew the proposal four days later, but it was not enough to quell the discontent

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that had simmered during the pandemic. Anger grew with reports of police brutality, deaths and disappearances of protesters.

Despite more than a half century of nearly constant civil conflict between the government and leftist rebels, Colombia is among the wealthier nations in the region, with one of the highest levels of university education in Latin America.

But it is plagued by profound inequality and violence, by powerful drug trafficking organizations and paramilitary groups blamed for displacing hundreds of thousands of people from their lands, and by murders of social and labor activists at a scale unseen elsewhere in the hemisphere.

Hopes that a 2016 peace deal with the largest rebel group would lead to a flowering of opportunities had been frustrated even before the pandemic hit.

Duque tried to calm the protests by meeting with young demonstrators in Cali and Bogota, the capital, promising subsidies for low-income students at public universities. But student leaders rejected the offer, complaining it would not apply to all students and repeated a pledge that was only partly fulfilled following 2019 protests.

The protests continued this weekend.

Human rights groups, including the U.N.'s rights body, have accused government security forces — long accustomed to confronting suspected guerrillas and drug gangs — of excessive use of force against protesters.

The government said it has confirmed only 14 deaths directly tied to the protests, but Human Rights Watch said it has received "credible" reports of 48 deaths — most between the ages of 13 to 34.

The government accuses protesters of vandalizing properties, looting and setting up roadblocks that have caused food shortages, prevented vaccine deliveries and blocked ambulances. Officials have also accused the protesters of trying to burn alive 10 police officers in Bogota.

The Ministry of Defense has reported the arrests of nearly 700 people as well as the seizure of 520 firearms and 14,000 sharp weapons.

Paloma Valencia, a pro-Duque senator, equated the roadblocks to "kidnappings of Colombian society with a social protest."

"We understand that our constitutional obligation is also to protect those who participate in the protests, in the mobilizations, if they are peaceful, but it is also to combat the vandalism and the violence when it emerges, and avoid that they affect the rights of others," Defense Minister Diego Molano told reporters last week.

Young people were also heavily involved in protests in 2018 and 2019 against other proposed government reforms. But the anger has spread throughout the nation as people lost jobs, friends and relatives to a pandemic that has claimed at least 80,250 lives across the country. Many have given up hopes of being able to afford to return to colleges when they reopen.

"Thousands of young people have taken the streets across Colombia because they feel they have no future. They see government institutions as distant entities that are not willing to listen to them," José Miguel Vivanco, Human Rights Watch's director for the Americas, said in a statement. "While some of them have engaged in violence, police officers have arbitrarily dispersed peaceful protests and responded with excessive, often brutal, force to violent protesters."

Colombia's security forces have spent decades fighting rebels — and have been often accused of cooperation with right-wing paramilitaries and of killing innocent civilians to boost "rebel" body counts.

"Struggles to make Colombia more democratic and equitable are often met with murderous force, whether by government forces, particularly the police in 2021, and in 2019, or sometimes what they called paramilitary forces that are kind of loosely allied in shadowy ways with usually the armed forces, or the police or both," said Forrest Hylton, a professor of history and politics at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia-Medellín. "So anybody who stands up for their rights in Colombia is often risking his or her life."

The government also has alleged that rebel factions that rejected the 2016 peace deal, along with drug traffickers, have infiltrated the protests.

"It's a continuation of a long history of state repression of popular protests, and stigmatizing protesters," said Lesley Gill, a Vanderbilt University professor focused on cultural anthropology, political violence

and human rights.

"The situation in Cali is so sad that today, unfortunately, young people in less favored communities are more likely to be linked to a criminal gang than to a cultural group," said Andrés Felipe González, a 29-year-old communications student and community leader in an impoverished neighborhood in Cali. "Colombia is in a very precarious situation and in all social classes."

Iran's hard-line judiciary chief registers presidential run

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's judiciary chief, a hard-line cleric linked to mass executions in 1988, registered on Saturday to run in the Islamic Republic's presidential election next month, a vote that comes as negotiators struggle to resuscitate Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

The cleric, Ebrahim Raisi, is among the more prominent hopefuls — he garnered nearly 16 million votes in the 2017 election. He lost that race to Iran's relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration struck the atomic accord.

Raisi's close ties to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his popularity — due partly to his televised anti-corruption campaign — could make him a favorite in the election. Analysts already believe that hard-liners enjoy an edge as Rouhani's term is limited from running again. The public has widely grown disenchanted with Rouhani's administration after 2018, when then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear deal.

Raisi, wearing a black turban that identifies him in Shiite tradition as a direct descendant of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, offered fiery remarks to journalists at the Interior Ministry as he registered. He vowed that if he wins the June 18 vote, corruption will be "dried up."

"Those who founded and partnered with the current situation can't claim they can change it," Raisi said. "People are complaining about the current situation. They are upset. Their disappointment is on the rise. This should be stopped."

The 60-year-old sought to strike a populist note, urging the public to donate to his campaign and "turn their homes into election headquarters" as he wasn't wealthy.

"We need individuals who believe in change," he said.

Raisi had been named as a possible successor to Iran's 82-year-old supreme leader, leading some to suggest he wouldn't run in the race. His entry immediately saw some hard-liners announce they would withdraw, raising Raisi's prominence further among the candidates.

A February telephone survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Toronto-based organization IranPoll found 27% of respondents said they wished Raisi would become Iran's next president, the highest among named candidates. The survey found 35% undecided; the poll interviewed 1,006 Iranians and had a margin of error of 3.09%.

"I think he's someone that the system trusts, particularly Khamenei," said Sanam Vakil, the deputy director of Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Program. "If you look at Raisi's biography and background, it reads quite similar to that of the supreme leader's."

"If Khamenei is thinking about his legacy, he would probably be looking for someone who is similar to him and ideologically aligned with him and looking to protect what Khamenei has done over the last 30 years," Vakil added.

Activists hold a jaded view of Raisi. As the head of the judiciary, he oversees a justice system in Iran that remains one of the world's top executioners. United Nations experts and others have criticized Iran for detaining dual nationals and those with ties abroad to be used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West.

Then there's the 1988 mass executions that came at the end of Iran's long war with Iraq. After Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini accepted a U.N.-brokered cease-fire, members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, heavily armed by Saddam Hussein, stormed across the Iranian border in a surprise attack.

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Iran ultimately blunted their assault, but the attack set the stage for the sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as "death commissions." Some who appeared were asked to identify themselves. Those who responded "mujahedeen" were sent to their deaths, while others were questioned about their willingness to "clear minefields for the army of the Islamic Republic," according to a 1990 Amnesty International report.

International rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed, while the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq puts the number at 30,000. Iran has never fully acknowledged the executions, apparently carried out on Khomeini's orders, though some argue that other top officials were effectively in charge in the months before his 1989 death.

Raisi, then a deputy prosecutor in Tehran, took part in some of the panels at Evin and Gohardasht prisons. A tape of a meeting of Raisi and his boss meeting prominent Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri leaked out in 2016, with Montazeri describing the executions as "the biggest crime in the history of the Islamic Republic."

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017. After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019.

Raisi previously ran the Imam Reza charity foundation, which manages a vast conglomerate of businesses and endowments in Iran believed to be worth tens of billions of dollars. It is one of many bonyads, or charitable foundations, fueled by donations or assets seized after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Analysts have speculated that Khamenei could be grooming Raisi as a possible candidate to be Iran's third-ever supreme leader, who has final say on all state matters and serves as the country's commander-in-chief.

Within Iran, candidates exist on a political spectrum that broadly includes hard-liners who want to expand Iran's nuclear program, moderates who hold onto the status quo, and reformists who want to change the theocracy from within.

Those calling for radical change find themselves blocked from even running for office by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel that vets and approves candidates under Khamenei's watch.

Other candidates who registered on Saturday, the last day of the registration, include Ali Larijani, a prominent conservative voice and former parliament speaker who later allied himself with Rouhani. Another hopeful is Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani, the eldest son of the late former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and a prominent reformist on Tehran's city council.

Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri also registered, as did Central Bank chief Abdolanasser Hemmati.

Several of the hopefuls have prominent backgrounds in the Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary force answerable only to Khamenei. Iran's former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad registered Wednesday.

The Guardian Council will announce a final list of candidates by May 27, and a 20-day campaign season begins the following day.

Soldiers who perished on secret mission are memorialized

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Nearly 60 years ago, dozens of soldiers assembled for a top secret mission to Vietnam, three years before President Lyndon Johnson officially sent U.S. combat troops to the country.

They never made it. Their airplane disappeared between Guam and the Philippines, leaving behind no trace.

Ever since, their families have been fighting to get answers about the mission from the Pentagon. They also want their loved ones to be recognized on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

For the families, it's been heart-wrenching that the soldiers were not properly memorialized like others who died in the war.

"I do feel frustrated. It's almost as if they never existed as soldiers. It's almost like they don't matter, that their deaths don't matter," said Dianna Taylor Crumpler, of Olive Branch, Mississippi, whose brother,

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James Henry Taylor, an Army chaplain, died on the flight.

On Saturday, families of more than 20 of the fallen soldiers were on hand for the unveiling of a memorial in Columbia Falls, Maine, to honor those who perished when the plane disappeared over the Pacific Ocean. Columbia Falls is about 190 miles (305 kilometers) east of Portland, Maine.

"It's incredible," said Donna Ellis, of Haslett, Michigan, who was 5 when her father, Melvin Lewis Hatt, died in the crash.

The mission, early in the Vietnam war, is shrouded in mystery.

Soldiers from across the country assembled at Travis Air Force Base in California before boarding a propeller-powered Lockheed Super Constellation operated by the Flying Tiger Line, which chartered flights for the U.S. military.

The 93 U.S. soldiers, three South Vietnamese and 11 crew members aboard Flight 739 never made it to Saigon. It departed from California and made refueling stops in Hawaii, Wake Island and Guam before vanishing on the next leg of the flight to the Philippines on March 16, 1962.

There was a report of a midair explosion witnessed by sailors on a tanker in the area, but no debris from the aircraft was recovered.

The families have spent years seeking answers to no avail. Freedom of Information Act requests by Ellis and others yielded redacted documents with little useful information about the clandestine mission.

"It turns into a rat maze," Ellis said.

Because their deaths were not in the combat zone, their names were not allowed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Sen. Gary Peters, a Democrat from Michigan, took up the cause and introduced legislation in 2019 to allow the names to be etched on the memorial, but it never made it to the Senate floor.

"It is past time that we properly honor those lost. That's why I will continue to work with my colleagues and the families of those lives lost on ways we can honor the servicemembers," Peters said.

In Maine, the founder of Wreaths Across America, which places wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery and at veteran gravesites around the world, was moved by the story and decided to create a monument. The granite stone has a marble marker with the names on it.

The unveiling Saturday featured a reading of the names, a rifle salute, the playing of taps and the laying of a wreath.

Phil Waite from the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration told the group he believes the memorial represents "a first step" to greater recognition. "I think there's more to come," he said.

The event provided an opportunity for families to get together and share stories.

"This will be closure for a lot of families," said Susie Linale, of Omaha, Nebraska, part of a contingent of six family members, including her sister and brother. They wore buttons with an image of their father, Albert Francis Williams Jr., who died in the crash.

Racist attacks revive Asian American studies program demand

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

As Dartmouth College sophomore Nicholas Sugiarto flipped through the course catalog last semester, two words caught his eye: "Asian American."

The 19-year-old Chinese Indonesian American didn't know Asian American-focused classes were even an option at the Hanover, New Hampshire, campus. The biomedical-engineering major ended up enrolling in "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature" and now wishes he could minor in Asian American studies.

"I never realized how long and storied the history of Asians in America has been," Sugiarto said. "You also hear about stories that just never made the news or never made it into the standard AP U.S. history textbooks."

That feeling of being seen resonates now more than ever for Asian American and Pacific Islander students and faculty at college campuses around the country. For all the "Stop AAPI Hate" hashtagging, accounts

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keep emerging of new incidents of Asian Americans being coronavirus scapegoats or made to feel like foreigners in their own country.

Ongoing anti-Asian attacks along with the March massage business shootings in Georgia that left six Asian women dead have provoked national conversations about visibility.

The debate has renewed an appetite at some colleges for Asian American studies programs. As student diversity grows, so does the desire for representation in the syllabus. But qualified professors of color say such programs won't last if they aren't being offered permanent decision-making power.

Inspired by his literature class, Sugiarto added his signature to the nearly 1,000 on a petition calling on Dartmouth to establish an Asian American studies major, a challenge that's been brought to the Ivy League school on and off for four decades.

Sugiarto and his classmates hope this time will be different given recent events.

Eng-Beng Lim, the Dartmouth professor who taught Sugiarto's class, said the petition gained momentum after the massage business killings, and even fueled discussions with administrators.

Those talks recently stalled, though Lim still described it as a "promising and critical impasse."

"When U.S. universities refuse to support Asian American studies that are framed in a way that we have framed it, it's really a missed opportunity to think about how we might have a more nuanced understanding of American racism beyond binary terms of Black and white," Lim said.

Pawan Dhingra, a professor at Amherst College and the incoming president of the Association for Asian American studies, said he is aware of a few other East Coast schools either considering Asian American studies or renewing their commitment to it.

"A lot of ethnic studies programs grew out of student demand during key inflection points in American history," Dhingra said. "This is an inflection point. The push for ethnic studies — in this case Asian American studies — fits the tradition of how these programs come to be. It's rarely the brainchild of administrators or faculty."

The concept of ethnic studies is believed to have started in California, where it became state law in August that California State University students take one ethnic studies course to graduate.

In 1968, students of color at San Francisco State University, which was named San Francisco State College at the time, joined Black classmates demanding a curriculum that wasn't just Euro-centric. What followed was five months of protests — the longest student strike in U.S. history — and hundreds of arrests.

In March 1969, after intense negotiations, the university officially launched a College of Ethnic Studies. Other schools also devised similar programs.

Alumni who were on strike 53 years ago see parallels with today's "Stop Asian Hate" rallies, said Mai-Nhung Le, chair of San Francisco State University's Asian American studies program. Young Asian Americans are again demanding classes relevant to them — not just history but everything from popular culture to environmental justice.

But while the backdrop in the '60s was the Vietnam War, today it's "two concurrent pandemics": COVID-19 and structural racism, Le said.

Establishing an Asian American studies department is one thing — nurturing it is another. Ethnic studies programs are on shaky ground if schools don't recruit instructors who can plan courses and mentor students.

Of more than 428,000 faculty who were tenured or on tenure-track at degree-granting institutions nationwide in 2019, 70% were white, 11% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% were Black, and 5% were Latino. Native Americans and Alaska Natives comprised just 0.4%, according to data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics.

A furor erupted at Dartmouth in 2016 when Aimee Bahng, an assistant English professor, was denied tenure. She had unanimous support from a departmental committee but not with higher-ranking campus officials. The rejection came as students were making another push for Asian American studies. Bahng had even started planning potential classes.

She recalls receiving hundreds of sympathetic messages from female academics in the U.S. and abroad.

"I had an electronic folder of just women or women of color who had been denied tenure," said Bahng,

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who now teaches at Pomona College. "It was amazing but also depressing. ... I always know when it's tenure-denial season because I still get a handful of emails."

Dartmouth freshman Anais Zhang, 18, never gave Asian American studies much thought until she was assigned to write about it for the school newspaper after the Atlanta-area massage business shootings. In her research, Zhang learned of all the attempts to start a program that ultimately went nowhere. It left her frustrated.

"I talked to a lot of my friends about the article and my shock at how we really don't have an institutionalized program and just my reaction learning about how previous students had put so much effort in petitioning the college and hiring professors ... only to have this support trickle away and have all this progress undone in the subsequent years," Zhang said.

A lot of times fledgling ethnic studies programs decline because junior professors who aren't full time or permanent have to carry them, according to Dhingra.

"It's just creating extra labor for faculty that burns people out and it isn't able to grow because it wasn't created with enough infrastructure in the first place," Dhingra said.

At the University of Arizona in Tucson, an Asian Pacific American studies minor launched last month. While it is an "example of the way the university is combating anti-Asian hate and ignorance," it was a culmination of efforts that started several years before the pandemic, said Brett Esaki, an assistant professor who helped come up with the coursework.

"The short- and long-term goals are definitely about stability," said Esaki, who is not tenured. "We can't just hope for another disaster to get people to say, 'You're important.'" _____

Tang reported from Phoenix and is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>

US climate envoy Kerry meets with pope on climate crisis

VATICAN CITY (AP) — John Kerry, President Joe Biden's climate envoy, met privately with Pope Francis on Saturday, afterward calling the pope a "compelling moral authority on the subject of the climate crisis" who has been "ahead of the curve."

The former U.S. Secretary of State told Vatican News that the pope's embrace of climate issues "hopefully can push people to greater ambition to get the job done."

Kerry is visiting European capitals to strengthen cooperation on climate change ahead of the next round of U.N. climate talks in Glasgow this November.

Kerry said United States, the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China, must take a lead in cutting emissions and be joined by other big emitting countries.

"Everybody shares an obligation here. No one country can get this job done. If the United States was at zero emissions tomorrow, we'd still have crisis," Kerry said.

The United States, which is responsible for 11% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, has set a target under Biden of reducing emissions over the next decade by 50% to 52%, Kerry said.

Another 20 developed countries are responsible for 73.75% of emissions, he added.

"We need other big emitting countries to step up and also offer some reductions. You can't just keep going along with a coal-fired power plant or with more coal coming online and really be the part of the solution that we need," Kerry said.

Ethiopia again delays national election amid deadly tensions

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia has again delayed its national election after some opposition parties said they wouldn't take part and as conflict in the country's Tigray region means no vote is being held there, further complicating Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's efforts to centralize power.

The head of the national elections board, Birtukan Mideksa, in a meeting with political parties' representatives on Saturday said the June 5 vote in Africa's second most populous country would be postponed, citing the need to finish printing ballots, training staffers and compiling voters' information. The board said

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she estimated a delay of two to three weeks.

Ethiopia last year delayed the vote, the first major electoral test for Abiy, citing the COVID-19 pandemic. That heightened tensions with the Tigray region's leaders, who declared that the prime minister's mandate had ended and defiantly held a regional vote of their own that Ethiopia called illegal.

Since then, war in Tigray has killed thousands and led the United States to allege that "ethnic cleansing" against Tigrayans was being carried out in the western part of Tigray, a region of some 6 million people. The term "ethnic cleansing" refers to forcing a population from a region through expulsions and other violence, often including killings and rapes.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday said the U.S. is "gravely concerned by the increasing number of confirmed cases of military forces blocking humanitarian access" to parts of Tigray, calling it "unacceptable behavior." The statement again urged the immediate withdrawal from Tigray of soldiers from neighboring Eritrea who witnesses say have blocked or looted aid and carried out atrocities including gang rapes. "Both Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities have repeatedly promised such a withdrawal," Blinken said.

Ethiopia's prime minister, who introduced sweeping political reforms after taking office in 2018 and won the Nobel Peace Prize the following year, has vowed that this election would be free and fair. Abiy will keep his post if his Prosperity Party wins a majority of seats in the national assembly.

But questions about the vote have been growing amid sometimes deadly ethnic tensions in other parts of the country of some 110 million people and more than 80 ethnic groups.

The campaign director for one of Ethiopia's largest opposition parties, Yilkal Getnet with the Hibir Ethiopia Democratic Party, told The Associated Press his party has long believed the country is not ready to hold an election at this time.

"There are lots of peace and security challenges across the country in addition to the border issue with Sudan," Yilkal said, adding that the safety of millions is in question. "As opposed to the ruling party's thinking, we don't believe that the election will solve these problems. A national dialogue on a range of issues should come first."

The European Union recently said it would not observe the vote, saying Ethiopia failed to guarantee the independence of its mission and refused its requests to allow the importation of communications equipment. Ethiopia replied that external observers "are neither essential nor necessary to certify the credibility of an election."

The opposition Oromo Federalist Congress earlier this year pulled out of the vote. Several of the party's leaders remain behind bars after a wave of violence last year sparked by the killing of a popular Omoro musician.

Late last month, five U.S. senators wrote to the U.S. special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, expressing concerns about Ethiopia's ability to hold fair elections while the Tigray conflict continues.

In response to that, Ethiopia's national election board said it was "striving" to ensure the poll will be free. "Shortfalls are inevitable given factors such as population size, development deficits at all levels, a nascent democratic culture and an increasingly charged political and security environment," it said.

The election board has said some 36.2 million people have registered to vote. It was hoped that up to 50 million would do so.

"We are deeply concerned about increasing political and ethnic polarization throughout the country," the State Department said Friday.

Cash windfall helps Newsom shake California recall election

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A fading coronavirus crisis and an astounding windfall of tax dollars have reshuffled California's emerging recall election, allowing Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom to talk about an end to most COVID-19 restrictions and propose billions in new spending as he looks to fend off Republicans who depict him as a foppish failure.

The governor spent much of 2020 on the defensive for whipsaw decisions during the depths of the pan-

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demic that angered many business owners and residents. But more recently he has appeared to steady his stride with the all-but-certain election looming this fall.

The first-term Democrat unleashed a torrent of new spending after the state's budget was blessed with a \$76 billion surplus and \$27 billion in federal pandemic aid. This week, he crisscrossed the state to unveil a string of proposals sure to bring smiles from many voters: \$12 billion to fight homelessness; checks up to \$1,100 for millions of low and middle-income earners who struggled during lockdowns; \$2.7 billion to pay for all of the state's 4-year-olds to go to kindergarten for free; and hundreds of millions to help small businesses recover from the economic downturn.

His budget released Friday was studded with initiatives favored by his progressive base, including \$7.2 billion to pay off people's outstanding rent and utility bills and \$300 million to forgive traffic and other fines for lower-income residents. There also was \$35 million to encourage local universal basic income programs and money to give Medicaid benefits to people 60 and older living in the country illegally.

As the virus threat diminishes, the economy rebounds and Californians return to familiar routines, Republican candidates will need to emphasize policy differences on issues like taxes and homelessness, rather than banking on lingering resentment from lockdowns and the pandemic, said Tim Rosales, a veteran GOP strategist who is sitting out the recall.

With conditions in the state improving "it's harder and harder to maintain that level of ... anger" during the worst days of the pandemic, he said, conceding Newsom is "on the right trajectory in terms of his approval ratings."

The goal for Newsom's team is not just surviving the recall. They are looking to position the governor for an expected 2022 re-election campaign that will kick off immediately following the recall election and, as importantly, restore his name to the national discussion about potential White House contenders.

Under a best-case scenario for the governor, a comeback story line from the recall might even help Newsom discredit the image popularized by his GOP gubernatorial rivals of a preening lightweight.

Republican businessman John Cox mocks Newsom as a "pretty boy." Former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer says the race is about "genuine versus phony."

Faulconer rolled out his own attention-grabbing proposal Wednesday: Ending the state income tax for individuals making up to \$50,000 and households up to \$100,000, which could find wide appeal with voters in a state where taxes seem to go relentlessly in one direction: higher.

Newsom was elected in a 2018 landslide over Cox, but his popularity tumbled as he contended with public unrest over long-running school and businesses closures during the pandemic, fallout from a multibillion-dollar unemployment benefits scandal and embarrassment over his decision to attend a lavish birthday dinner at an exclusive restaurant in November while lecturing residents to stay home for safety.

Look for the Republicans to continue to attack his image — he remains shackled to the French Laundry debacle. In one night at that restaurant with lobbyists and friends, he managed to reinforce a trifecta of loathsome stereotypes about politicians — hypocrisy, elitism and the whiff of improper backroom deal-making. He later apologized for what he called a "bad mistake."

While Newsom dominated the narrative of the race all week — the economy is "roaring back," he told reporters in Los Angeles — a sudden spike in virus cases or another epic season of wildfires would test him again. And schools could also be a vulnerable flank. California badly trailed other states in getting children back into classrooms, a reality Republicans repeat at every turn.

The leading GOP candidates in the race start at a disadvantage in heavily Democratic California, where registered Democrats outnumber GOP voters by nearly 2-to-1. A Republican candidate hasn't won a state-wide race since 2006, when Arnold Schwarzenegger won re-election after gaining office in a recall election.

Newsom's team has worked for months to tie the recall to national Republicans and supporters and operatives of former President Donald Trump, who is broadly unpopular in California outside his GOP base.

For Newsom, one of his advantages as a candidate was on vivid display this week: He used the power of his office to dominate the public stage as he made appearances in San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland and the Central Valley, among other locations.

Cox, meanwhile, has been campaigning with a bear in a bid to attract publicity. He criticized Newsom

Friday for the surge in spending: "We should be slashing taxes and making California more affordable and not ballooning the size of our government," he said.

Reality TV personality and former Olympian Caitlyn Jenner so far has appeared more curio than contender, barely registering in recent polling. She tweeted Friday that "California should already be fully open!"

Faulconer's biggest challenge is becoming known outside his hometown area in San Diego. He said he intends to take his campaign to communities around the state, where voters are looking for "somebody who actually has the experience ... who can bring positive change and reform."

Thad Kousser, a political science professor at the University of California, San Diego, said a lot will change by the time voters go to the polls. Will the massive investment in homelessness make a change? Will Newsom suffer another self-inflicted wound like his trip to the French Laundry?

"Right now the recall is not in the hands of the governor or its backers. This is all about the direction of the state," he said. "What really matters is where we are in the fall."

'There was no going back': Migrants send kids into US alone

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

LA JOYA, Texas (AP) — Marely had traveled for 13 days, trekking with her mother from Central America to the busiest corridor for illegal U.S.-Mexico border crossings. Then, as the 12-year-old Salvadoran girl got on an inflatable raft to cross the Rio Grande in Texas in the middle of the night, she discovered her mom wasn't coming with her.

Her mom told her that she loved her very much right before the boat got pushed into the water.

"I thought she had already gotten on, but she hadn't," Marely told The Associated Press this week, tears rolling down her cheeks.

But she didn't scream or ask the smugglers to go back and get her mother.

"I knew she was on the other side. There was no going back. They told us to run, to keep going," said Marely, who turned herself over to Border Patrol agents in La Joya, Texas.

The AP is not using the girl's last name. It does not normally name children without permission from their parents, and the identity of her parents could not be obtained.

Growing numbers of migrant families are making the heart-wrenching decision to separate from their children and send them into America alone. Many families with kids older than 6 have been quickly expelled from the country under federal pandemic-related powers that don't allow migrants to seek asylum. But they know that President Joe Biden's administration is allowing unaccompanied children to stay in the U.S. while their cases are decided.

Forced out of the country, they are sending their older children, like Marely, back to cross alone. These self-separations mean children arrive in the United States confused and in distress. Many have traveled hundreds of miles with their parents without understanding why they can't cross the last stretch together.

Once in the U.S., Marely joined two teenagers traveling without their parents and a larger group of families fleeing poverty, storm devastation and violence in their homelands. For two hours, the girl from a village south of San Salvador walked as a thunderstorm brewed overhead in the vast Texas' Rio Grande Valley, a busy stretch for river crossings.

Marely's mother had her memorize the full name and number for her grandmother in Washington, D.C., who told the AP she was expecting to receive her granddaughter.

As more families decide to send their children alone, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has been pressed by lawmakers about the possibility that expulsions could be a "new source of family separation." It follows widespread outrage over former President Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" policy that forced apart families on the border, some of whom still haven't been reunited.

Mayorkas has defended speedy family expulsions, saying they protect both the American public and migrants. He said officials are "hearing anecdotally" of families who self-separate and added that about 40% of unaccompanied children have a parent or legal guardian in the U.S. and 50% have other relatives who can take care of them after they are released from government custody.

April was the second-busiest month on record for unaccompanied children encountered at the border —

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17,171 were stopped — following March's all-time high of 18,960, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

This week, Border Patrol agents found five unaccompanied migrant girls, ranging from 7 years to 11 months old, near the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas.

Agents about 250 miles (400 kilometers) south in La Joya, Texas, late Wednesday came across an 8-year-old Honduran girl named Emely, who had been walking in the brush for six hours with a group of strangers and had lost a shoe in the mud. She was sobbing uncontrollably because she lost the number of her mother who she says was expecting her in the U.S. and didn't know where she lived.

Emely had lost sight of a fellow migrant who had her contact information, but the mother saw an AP photograph of her arrival on the Spanish-language broadcast Univision and contacted the network.

In an encampment in the Mexican border city of Reynosa, near where Marely last saw her mother, the numbers of expelled migrant families are growing. And they are making desperate decisions.

Jose Rodriguez, 41, of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, has been staying under a gray tarp with a group of Hondurans, but he hasn't been able to sleep since he sent his 8-year-old son in mid-April with a distant cousin to cross the river into Roma, Texas.

Rodriguez had tried to cross the border with his son Jordyn, but the two were expelled in early March. They had no money and no way to return home.

"As a parent, it is very difficult. I do not wish this upon anyone. There are people who ask me if I sent my son. 'Yes,' I tell them, 'but don't do it,'" Rodriguez said. "You need to have a lot of faith and cling to God in order not to fall apart. If you are weak, you may pass out, and if you have heart disease, you may die. It is very hard."

His wife, who stayed behind in Honduras with their 1-year-old, initially opposed sending Jordyn to cross the border alone, but Rodriguez persuaded her. He told her their lives in Honduras would only get worse, with the threat of gangs and the economy hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic and two tropical storms.

To pay the smugglers' fees for his son's solo attempt, Rodriguez washed dishes at a taco stand near the encampment for a month and a half. It also took some convincing to get Jordyn to go.

"You have to keep going. You will have the best clothes, the best computer and tennis shoes, and toy cars that light up," Rodriguez said he told his son when they said goodbye.

For four days, Rodriguez says he walked around the plaza, stopping every couple of steps to cry, until he received a recorded audio message from a cousin in the U.S. whose number he had written on Jordyn's birth certificate.

"I have good news for you. They have the boy in a home for children his age," the cousin said.

Social workers now call Rodriguez from a shelter in Chicago twice a week to see if there is anyone Jordyn can stay with in the U.S. Relatives said they could not take care of Jordyn because they also were recent immigrants and had their own children to support.

"To this day I do not sleep. The food doesn't taste of anything, because I think of this every single moment," Rodriguez said. "What I want is to be with him."

Heart study: Low- and regular-dose aspirin safe, effective

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

An unusual study that had thousands of heart disease patients enroll themselves and track their health online as they took low- or regular-strength aspirin concludes that both doses seem equally safe and effective for preventing additional heart problems and strokes.

But there's a big caveat: People had such a strong preference for the lower dose that it's unclear if the results can establish that the treatments are truly equivalent, some independent experts said. Half who were told to take the higher dose took the lower one instead or quit using aspirin altogether.

"Patients basically decided for themselves" what they wanted to take because they bought the aspirin on their own, said Dr. Salim Virani, a cardiologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston who had no role in the study.

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Still, the results show there's little reason to take the higher dose, 325 milligrams, which many doctors assumed would work better than 81-milligram "baby aspirin," he said.

Results were published Saturday by the New England Journal of Medicine and discussed at an American College of Cardiology conference.

Aspirin helps prevent blood clots, but it's not recommended for healthy people who have not yet developed heart disease because it carries a risk of bleeding. Its benefits are clear, though, for folks who already have had a heart attack, bypass surgery or clogged arteries requiring a stent.

But the best dose isn't known, and the study aimed to compare them in a real-world setting. The study was funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, created under the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to help patients make informed decisions about health care.

About 15,000 people received invitations to join through the mail, email or a phone call and enrolled on a website where they returned every three to six months for follow-up. A network of participating health centers supplied medical information on participants from their electronic records and insurance claims.

The participants were randomly assigned to take low- or regular-dose aspirin, which they bought over the counter. Nearly all were taking aspirin before the study began and 85% were already on a low dose, so "it was an uphill task right from the get-go" to get people to use the dose they were told, Virani said.

After roughly two years, about 7% of each group had died or been hospitalized for a heart attack or a stroke. Safety results also were similar — less than 1% had major bleeding requiring hospitalization and a transfusion.

Nearly 41% of those assigned to take the higher dose switched at some point to the lower one, and that high rate "could have obscured a true difference" in safety or effectiveness, Colin Baigent, a medical scientist at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom, wrote in a commentary in the medical journal.

One study leader, Dr. Schuyler Jones of Duke University, said the study still provides valuable guidance. If patients are taking low-dose aspirin now, "staying on that dose instead of switching is the right choice," he said. People doing well on 325 milligrams now may want to continue on that and should talk with their doctors if they have any concerns.

For new patients, "in general, we're going to recommend starting the low dose," Jones said.

Virani said people must remember that aspirin is a medicine and that even though it's sold over the counter, patients shouldn't make decisions on its use by themselves.

"Don't change the dose or stop without talking to someone," he warned. "This is important, especially for a therapy like aspirin."

Kid reporter who interviewed Obama at White House dies at 23

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — The student reporter who gained national acclaim when he interviewed President Barack Obama at the White House in 2009 has died of natural causes, his family says.

Damon Weaver was 23 when he died May 1, his sister, Candace Hardy, told the Palm Beach Post. Further details were not released. He had been studying communications at Albany State University in Georgia.

Weaver was 11 when he interviewed Obama for 10 minutes in the Diplomatic Room on Aug. 13, 2009, asking questions that focused primarily on education. He covered school lunches, bullying, conflict resolution and how to succeed.

Weaver then asked Obama to be his "homeboy," saying then-Vice President Joe Biden had already accepted.

"Absolutely," a smiling Obama said, shaking the boy's hand.

He used that meeting to later interview Oprah Winfrey and athletes like Dwyane Wade.

"He was just a nice person, genuine, very intelligent," Hardy said. "Very outspoken, outgoing. He never said no to anybody."

Weaver got his start in fifth grade when he volunteered for the school newscast at K.E. Cunningham/ Canal Point Elementary in a farm community on the shores of Lake Okeechobee.

"Damon was the kid who ran after me in the hall to tell me he was interested," his teacher, Brian Zimmerman, told the Post in 2016. "And right away, I just saw the potential for the way he was on camera."

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You could see his personality come through. He wasn't nervous being on camera."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, May 16, the 136th day of 2021. There are 229 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 16, 1939, the federal government began its first food stamp program in Rochester, New York.

On this date:

In 1770, Marie Antoinette, age 14, married the future King Louis XVI of France, who was 15.

In 1868, at the U.S. Senate impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson, 35 out of 54 senators voted to find Johnson guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors" over his attempted dismissal of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, falling one vote short of the two-thirds majority needed to convict; the trial ended 10 days later after two other articles of impeachment went down to defeat as well.

In 1943, the nearly month-long Warsaw Ghetto Uprising came to an end as German forces crushed the Jewish resistance and blew up the Great Synagogue.

In 1960, the first working laser was demonstrated at Hughes Research Laboratories in Malibu, California, by physicist Theodore Maiman.

In 1966, China launched the Cultural Revolution, a radical as well as deadly reform movement aimed at purging the country of "counter-revolutionaries."

In 1975, Japanese climber Junko Tabei became the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

In 1984, comedian Andy Kaufman died in Los Angeles at age 35.

In 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *California v. Greenwood*, ruled that police could search discarded garbage without a search warrant. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop released a report declaring nicotine was addictive in ways similar to heroin and cocaine.

In 1990, death claimed entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. in Los Angeles at age 64 and "Muppets" creator Jim Henson in New York at age 53.

In 1991, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to address the United States Congress as she lauded U.S.-British cooperation in the Persian Gulf War.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton publicly apologized for the notorious Tuskegee experiment, in which government scientists deliberately allowed Black men to weaken and die of treatable syphilis.

In 2006, the Pentagon released the first video images of American Airlines Flight 77 crashing into the military headquarters and killing 189 people on 9/11.

Ten years ago: The Vatican told bishops around the world it was important to cooperate with police in reporting priests who'd raped and molested children and asked them to develop guidelines for preventing sex abuse; however, victims groups immediately denounced the recommendations as "dangerously flawed." Endeavour blasted off on NASA's next-to-last shuttle flight commanded by Mark Kelly, husband of wounded Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama called on the nation to support law enforcement officers as he bestowed the Medal of Valor on 13 who risked their lives. The International Space Station reached the orbital milestone of 100,000 laps around Earth, akin to traveling more than 2.6 billion miles in 17 1/2 years. Minnesota Timberwolves center Karl-Anthony Towns was named the NBA Rookie of the Year.

One year ago: As officials around the country cautiously eased more coronavirus restrictions, New Orleans allowed restaurants to reopen, but with limited capacity. Italy announced that it would reopen its borders on June 3, effectively ending Europe's longest and strictest coronavirus lockdown just as the summer tourism season began. Democrats demanded that the White House hand over all records related to President Donald Trump's latest firing of a federal watchdog, this time a State Department inspector general; they suggested it might be an act of retaliation by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Senator and Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker is 90. Former Director

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of National Intelligence Dan Coats is 78. Jazz musician Billy Cobham is 77. Actor Danny Trejo is 77. Actor Bill Smitrovich is 74. Actor Pierce Brosnan is 68. Actor Debra Winger is 66. Olympic gold medal gymnast Olga Korbut is 65. Olympic gold medal marathon runner Joan Benoit Samuelson is 63. Actor Mare Winningham is 62. Rock musician Boyd Tinsley (The Dave Matthews Band) is 57. Rock musician Krist Novoselic (noh-voh-SEL'-ik) is 56. Singer Janet Jackson is 55. Country singer Scott Reeves (Blue County) is 55. Actor Brian (BREE'-un) F. O'Byrne is 54. R&B singer Ralph Tresvant (New Edition) is 53. Actor David Boreanaz is 52. Political commentator Tucker Carlson is 52. Actor Tracey Gold is 52. International Tennis Hall of Famer Gabriela Sabatini is 51. Country singer Rick Trevino is 50. Musician Simon Katz is 50. TV personality Bill Rancic is 50. Actor Khary Payton is 49. Rapper Special Ed is 49. Actor Tori Spelling is 48. Actor Sean Carrigan is 47. Singer-rapper B. Slade (formerly known as Tonex) is 46. Actor Lynn Collins is 44. Actor Melanie Lynskey is 44. Actor Jim Sturgess is 43. Actor Joseph Morgan is 40. DJ Alex Pall (The Chainsmokers) is 36. Actor Megan Fox is 35. Actor Drew Roy is 35. Actor Jacob Zachar is 35. Actor-comedian Jermaine Fowler is 33. Actor Thomas Brodie-Sangster is 31. Actor Marc John Jefferies is 31. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Ashley Wagner is 30. Actor Miles Heizer is 27.