

Groton Daily Independent

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UpComing Events

Tuesday, Nov. 30

Groton Novice Debate
JH GBB hosting Clark/Willow Lake (7th at 6 p.m. with 8th to follow)

Wednesday, Dec. 1

8:30 a.m. to Noon: ACT Practice Test

Thursday, Dec. 2

LifeTouch Pictures Retake at Elementary, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

8:30 a.m. to Noon: ACT Practice Test

JH GBB at Northwestern (7th at 6:30 p.m. followed by 8th)

Friday, Dec. 3

State Oral Interp at Huron

8:30 a.m. to Noon: ACT Practice Test

“Inaction breeds doubt and fear.
Actions breed confidence and
courage. If you want to conquer fear,
do not sit home and think about it.
Go out and get busy.”

-Dale Carnegie



Saturday, Dec. 4

State Oral Interp at Huron

10 a.m.: JH GBB Jamboree in Groton

10 a.m.: Wrestling Invite at Clark-Willow Lake

Monday, Dec. 6

4 p.m.: School Board planning/work session

JH GBB hosts Langford. 7th at 6 p.m. with 8th to follow

Tuesday, Dec. 7

GBB hosts Flandreau Indian. Varsity only at 6 p.m.

JHGBB at Tiospa Zina (7th at 4 p.m. with 8th to follow)

Thursday, Dec. 9

7 p.m.: MS/HS Christmas Concert

Friday, Dec. 10

GBB hosts Britton-Hecla. JV at 6 p.m. with Varsity to follow

Saturday, Dec. 11

8 a.m. to Noon: ACT testing at GHS

10 a.m.: Wrestling Tourney at LaMoure

Boys Basketball at Britton-Hecla. JV at 1:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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**Hackers are out there!
The message on the
right is showing up way
too much on Facebook.**

I was hacked so don't accept any
friend requests from me

1 Comment



Quizzes like...

Which Marvel® character are you? What Game of Thrones® family do you belong in? Find out your Christmas elf name.

Sounds like just a few harmless social media quizzes, right? Wrong. These games are one of the many tools hackers use to steal your personal information without you even realizing it.

It's a question you can't help but answer: Which Hogwarts® house do you belong in, Slytherin® or Gryffindor®? While it may look like another harmless social media quiz, it is actually one of many phishing tactics hackers use to steal your personal information and turn it against you. Here's how they do it:

The questions

Ever wondered why quiz questions are so specific? They're often the same ones you answer when setting up online accounts and security steps. If the question looks too familiar, skip it.

Your answers

The information you provide on these quizzes can be mined and sold to advertisers. The best-case scenario: You get a targeted ad to your favorite store. The worst: Your answers wind up in the wrong hands—those of scammers and hackers. Be careful filling in the blanks on your next quiz.

Your online account

Taking a quiz while logged in to your social media profile allows hackers to potentially use the platform to learn more about you, gain control of your account (and others linked to it), and steal your identity. So avoid giving any quiz app "access" to your login information.

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*Olive Grove's
5th Annual*

*Christmas
Tour of Homes
& Holiday
Party*

**Weston & Emily Dinger
Cassels House Inn & Events
Julie Schaller (3 of Life)
Wage Memorial Library & City Office
Olde Bank N Café B & B**

**SATURDAY,
DEC. 4, 2021**

**TOUR OF
HOMES
4-7 P.M.**

**HOLIDAY
PARTY**

4-CLOSE

**Silent Basket Items
Bidding closes at 8:30 p.m.
Live Auction begins at 8:30 p.m.**

Coffee, Apple Cider and Goodies at the Club House
A variety of snacks served.

**\$15 tickets available at
Lori's Pharmacy, Groton
Groton Ford**

Hair & Company, Aberdeen

Come on out for a fun evening!

Support your local golf course!

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'Tis the Season for Y93.2

The holiday season is here, and many wonderful activities are happening. As you hustle and bustle, be aware that accidents and injuries can occur. When you see a doctor, they record a diagnosis code explaining the purpose of the appointment. Some codes describe the actual injury and others describe what happened during the injury. For example, Y93.2 is the code for "activities involving snow and ice". So, if you went sledding, crashed into a tree, and broke your left femur or thigh bone, your medical chart would show these codes: S72.8X2A "other fracture of left femur, initial encounter for closed fracture", W22.0 "striking against stationary object", and Y93.2.

With this in mind, let's have some fun and review codes that would be used for mishaps from popular holiday songs and movies. For the grandma who was run over by a reindeer, we would use codes W55.32XA and V06.00xa defined as "struck by other hoof stock, initial encounter" and "pedestrian on foot injured in collision with other nonmotor vehicle in nontraffic accident", respectively. The song does not specify injuries received from this accident, but there is mention of drinking too much eggnog. Therefore, we might verify the diagnosis of R78.9 which is "finding of alcohol in blood".

In the holiday movie A Christmas Story, Ralphie wants a Daisy Red Ryder BB gun. His mother warns that he will end up with S05.90XA "unspecified injury of unspecified eye and orbit." Of course, that doesn't have the same ring to it as "You'll shoot your eye out!" Don't forget Ralphie's classmate who gets his tongue stuck to the frozen flagpole. His injury would be noted as T33.90 and S00.502A which are "superficial frostbite to unspecified sites" and "unspecified injury to oral cavity, initial encounter." Ouch!

I hope that Santa can avoid E73.0 and W13.2xxA which are "lactose Intolerance" and "fall from, out of or through roof, initial encounter." Either of those situations would make Santa less merry and bright. And let's hope the jolly old elf has seatbelts in his sleigh because if Rudolph gets anxious in the fog and makes a sharp turn, Santa might have a V00.221A, "fall from sled, initial encounter".

May your stockings stay safely hung by the fireplace without X02.0XXA "exposure to flames in controlled fire in building or structure [fireplace], initial encounter". No one wants their holiday ruined by Z63.1 "problems in relationship with in-laws". And hopefully your children don't have any Z62.891 "sibling rivalry" issues.

My wish for all of you is a peaceful, silent night, preferably not due to H83.3 "noise induced hearing loss" from all the carolers at your door. And, in the New Year, may you only need to come to the clinic for Z00.00 "encounter for general adult medical examination without abnormal findings".

Happy Ho, Ho, Holidays and stay healthy out there people!

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



TRUTHFUL • TESTED • TIMELY

Twenty Seasons



By Jill Kruse, D.O.

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Wolves claim fourth victory with win over MSU Billings

Aberdeen, S.D. - The Northern State women's basketball program claimed its fourth straight victory Friday night with a 76-63 non-conference win over Montana State Billings on Day one of the Dacotah Bank Classic at Wachs Arena. Northern put four players in double figures and a fifth just outside that benchmark in the win.

QUICK HITS

Final score: NSU 76, MSU-B 63

Records: NSU 4-1, MSU-B 5-3

Attendance: 1554

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State led at every quarter break, but had to withstand a cool fourth quarter of action to hold onto the win

After shooting the ball at a better-than-50 percent margin through the first three quarters, the Wolves went 0-for-13 from the floor in the final stanza

However, Northern went 12-for-16 from the free throw line in that quarter and rode its significant cushion to the win

Rianna Fillipi posted a career-high 10 assists in a 13-point double-double performance

Laurie Rogers also had 13 points and added 10 rebounds.

Carian Kunkel had 18 points to lead the Yellowjackets

STATISTICAL LEADERS

Kailee Oliverson: 20 points, 9 rebounds

Lexi Roe: 14 points, 7 rebounds

Rianna Fillipi: 13 points, 10 assists

Laurie Rogers: 13 points, 10 rebounds, 2 blocks

Northern women fall to Michigan Tech

Aberdeen, S.D. - The Northern women could not find a way to get on track offensively Saturday evening, falling 81-69 to a hot-shooting Michigan Tech squad to close out the Dacotah Bank Classic at Wachs Arena. The loss marked Northern's first since a Nov. 12 loss to No. 6 Central Missouri and snapped what had been a 4-game win streak.

QUICK HITS

Final score: Michigan Tech 81, Northern State 69

Records: Northern State 4-2, 1-0 NSIC; Michigan Tech 5-1

Attendance: 1554

HOW IT HAPPENED

After a modest start to the game, the visiting Huskies caught fire in the final three periods of the game and ended the night shooting 53 percent (35-of-66) from the floor, including 8-of-19 (42.1 percent) from 3-point range.

The Wolves, however, struggled to find a consistent rhythm to their offense, going 4-of-19 from 3-point range.

Northern did gain a bit of traction in the third quarter, converting on 8-of-15 attempts from the floor (53.5 percent).

STATISTICAL LEADERS

Kailee Oliverson: 14 points, 4 rebounds

Haley Johnson: 13 points, 8 rebounds, 2 steals

Rianna Fillipi: 11 points, 3 assists

UP NEXT

Northern now turns its attention to the heart of the NSIC season, heading to Minot State Thursday, then returning to Wachs Arena Saturday to host U-Mary.

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Northern men shoot past Midwestern State

Aberdeen, S.D. - The Northern State men's basketball program used a hot start to propel its way past a scrappy Midwestern State (Texas) squad 84-70 Friday night to cap the opening day of the Dacotah Bank Classic at Wachs Arena.

QUICK HITS

Final score: Northern State 84, Midwestern State 70

Records: Northern State 5-3, 0-1 NSIC; Midwestern State 2-3, 0-0 Lone Star

Attendance: 2554

HOW IT HAPPENED:

Northern started the night with 3-pointers from Jackson Moni and Jordan Belka and, after a brief see-saw battle on the scoreboard, eventually stretched its lead to as man as 20 by the end of the half.

Midwestern State cut it to 10 on two different occasions in the second half, but could get no closer.

The Mustangs were 6-of-21 from 3-point range in the second half, with a good number of those attempts coming late in the half in an attempt to jumpstart a run at the Wolves. Northern held off every advance, however, and countered with free throws down the stretch to seal the victory.

STATISTICAL LEADERS

Jordan Belka: 21 points, 6 rebounds

Sam Masten: 16 points, 8 rebounds, 8-for-9 FT

Gus Reede: 12 points, 3-of-6 3FG

Wolves dominant in win over Saints

Aberdeen, S.D. - The Northern State men drilled 14 3-pointers in a big 83-47 win over cross-town opponent Presentation Saturday evening to close out the Dacotah Bank Classic at Wachs Arena. Despite losing two players to illness and a third to injury, the Wolves led from the opening tip en route to their sixth win of the season.

QUICK HITS

Final score: Northern State 83, Presentation 47

Records: Northern State 6-3; Presentation 0-4

Attendance: 1571

HOW IT HAPPENED

True freshman Trey Longstreet came off the bench to log nearly 30 minutes of action at the point guard position for the Wolves and guided Northern to an efficient 27-of-54 shooting effort in Saturday's win. Longstreet had seven points, three rebounds, six assists and a steal against just two turnovers in the win. Nearly all of those totals marked season and career-bests for the freshman.

Jackson Moni also gave the Wolves a top effort offensively, drilling 5-of-7 3-pointers on his way to a career-high 27 points and 10 rebounds.

As a team, Northern tallied 20 assists and nine steals while turning the ball over just 12 times. The Wolves never trailed in the game, pulling steadily away. A 17-point run late in the second half helped fuel the decisive victory.

STATISTICAL LEADERS

Jackson Moni: 27 points, 10 rebounds, 3 steals, 1 assist, 9-for-12 shooting

Jordan Belka: 18 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 steals

Cole Bergan: 13 points, 7 assists

Trey Longstreet, 7 points, 6 assists, 3 rebounds, 3-for-4 shooting

UP NEXT

Saturday's win wrapped up non-conference play for the Wolves, who now turn their attention to NSIC play beginning Thursday at Minot State. Northern will host U-Mary Saturday at Wachs Arena.

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Stange, 97, has served as Senior Citizens secretary for 33 years

by Dorene Nelson



Elda Stange

Elda Stange, a Groton area life-time resident, will be 98 years YOUNG on December 14th. This sweet lady with a wonderful smile and great disposition would love to receive greetings and birthday wishes on this amazing day. Elda's address is PO Box 305, Groton, SD 57445.

Elda, the youngest of nine children, was born and raised on her parents' farm, John and Emilie Stange, located southwest of Groton. She attended grade school at West Hanson Country School and was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, West Hanson township.

Elda was a much-loved Sunday School teacher in this small country church. She was so sweet, kind, and sincere about her love for her Lord that her students listened attentively and never misbehaved!

She was also hired as a nanny for new mothers in the area. Dorene Sager Nelson was one of those newborns a long time ago!

Following her father's death, Elda and her mother lived with Ed and Leona Siek, one of Elda's older sisters, on the Siek farm. In 1960 when Leona's husband passed away, the two sisters moved into Groton and shared the house where Elda still lives today.

Elda receives help from her neighbors since she is now living alone. Bill McKiver does snow removal for her, and Duane Flihs mows her lawn. Jodi Bull helps her with other tasks around the house and yard.

Her dear friend Sandy Strom goes out of her way to pick Elda up for church every Sunday. Sandy also helps her with some shopping, fixes her hair, and takes her to doctor appointments.

Eunice McColister provides rides for Elda in order for her to attend other church meetings and events. Elda is grateful for all of the help she receives and wants to thank all of her wonderful neighbors and friends who take such good care of her!

Elda is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton as well as being active in the LWML (ladies' aid) and the quilters. Even though she is 98, Elda still takes her turn serving at LWML. In addition to her delicious desserts, she also is handy with the needle on quilting days and keeps busy crocheting and doing other craft projects.

During the COVID pandemic, the quilters at St. John's couldn't meet together, so Elda worked at home, making quilt top after quilt top, about 35 altogether, for when the group could get together again and assemble the quilts.

Elda is also a member of the Groton Garden Club and of the Groton Area Senior Citizens. According to Ruby Donovan, Elda has been the secretary for the Senior Citizens for the past thirty-three years! That must be some kind of a record!

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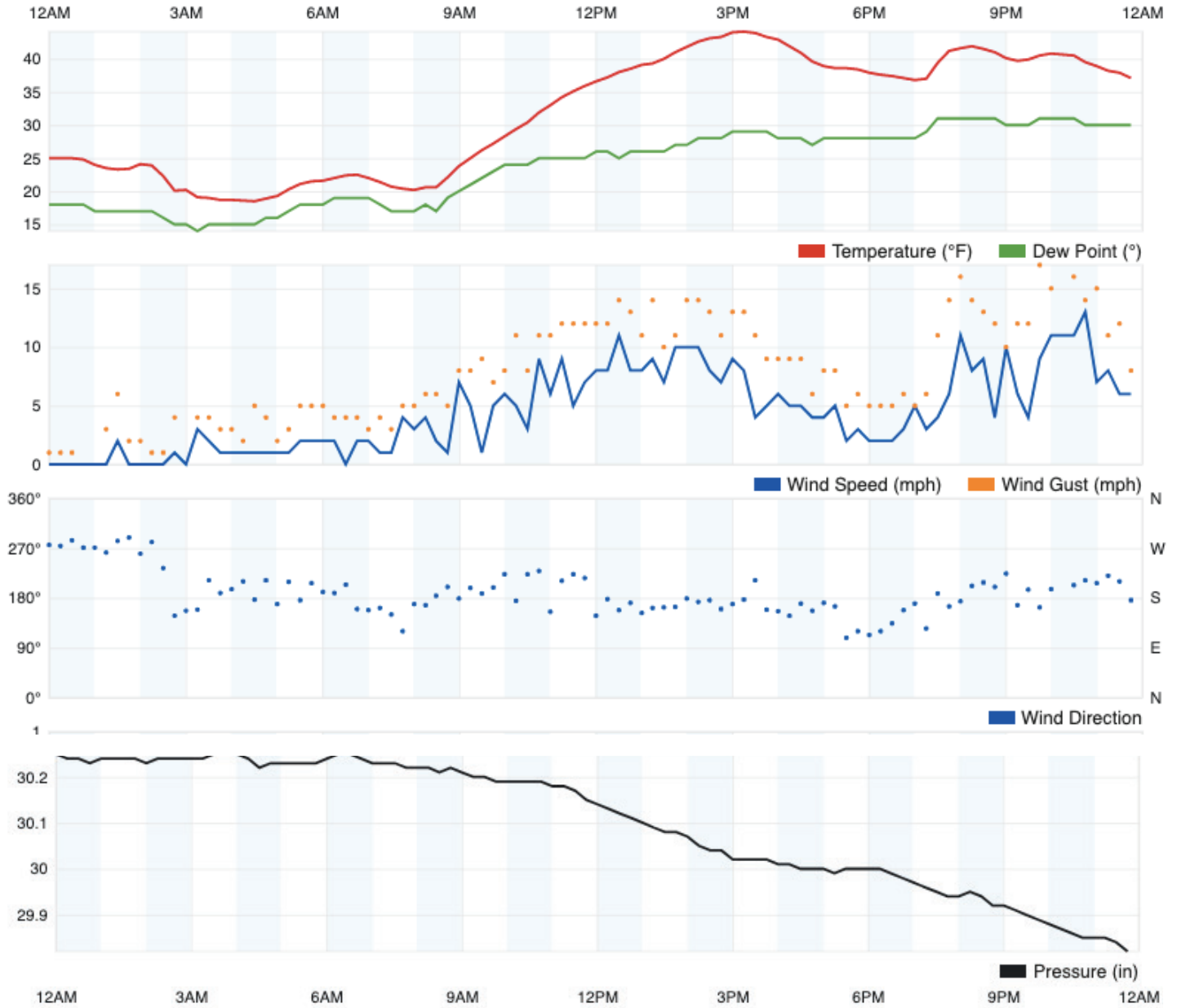
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Hale
GROVES

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 55 °F

Tonight



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 28 °F

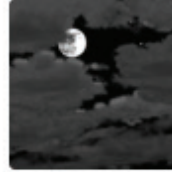
Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 44 °F

Tuesday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 33 °F

Wednesday



Partly Sunny

High: 58 °F

What Month?



Mid October Temperatures Return...

Monday

Wednesday

Thursday

Highs in the 50s, with some low 60s west of the Missouri River

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Yes, it's the end of November. However, with highs in the 50s, and some low 60s west of the Missouri River, temperatures are more like mid October! A few record highs could be broken. If you haven't prepped the snow blower or were waiting to put up Christmas lights, now is an excellent time. While temperatures will only top out mainly in the 40s on Tuesday, that will still be 10 to 15 degrees above average for this time of year. Light rain will be possible tonight over central South Dakota, with little to no accumulation. Otherwise, dry weather will continue.

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Today in Weather History

November 29, 1896: The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Havre Montana. It marked the culmination of a two week long cold wave. A stagnate high-pressure area similar to those over Siberia during the winter was the cause. During the month of November temperatures across Montana and the Dakotas averaged 15 to 25 degrees below normal. Aberdeen's low temperature on this day was 25 degrees below zero. The average temperature for the month was 9.7 degrees, or 19.6 degrees below normal.

November 29, 1996: Widespread freezing rain laid down a thick layer of ice across a large part of north-east South Dakota and west central Minnesota on the 29th and 30th, making driving on area highways and Interstate 29 treacherous. Later on the 29th, the freezing rain changed over to snow. Snowfall amounts ranged from 2 to 4 inches across the area. Numerous accidents occurred throughout the weekend with mainly minor injuries. Many cars and trucks also went into ditches. The South Dakota Highway Patrol reported in, one three hour period that along I-29, from the Clear Lake exit to the Codington County line 40 to 45 vehicles were in the ditch. Many activities and sporting events were also postponed or cancelled.

November 29, 2002: High winds of 30 to 50 mph, gusting to near 70 mph, occurred much of the afternoon across central and north central South Dakota. A tractor-trailer, carrying a load of livestock, was overturned on Highway 12 about three miles east of Mobridge. The tractor was totaled, four cattle were killed, and the driver suffered minor injuries. High winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to near 60 mph, also occurred across Roberts and Grant counties in the late afternoon hours.

November 29, 1991: A tornado struck southeast Springfield, Missouri, causing F4 damage. Shortly after touchdown, the tornado reached F3 intensity, approximately 3 miles north of the town of Nixa. While crossing Highway 65, the tornado picked up a truck and dropped it onto a frontage road, killing one passenger and injuring ten others. The tornado intensified to F4 strength as it moved through the Woodbridge and Natural Bridge Estates subdivisions where 15 homes were destroyed. Altogether, two people were killed and 64 others were injured.

1896 - The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Havre, MT. It marked the culmination of a two week long cold wave caused by a stagnate high pressure area similar to those over Siberia during the winter. During the month of November temperatures across Montana and the Dakotas averaged 15 to 25 degrees below normal. (David Ludlum)

1969 - Dense fog along the Jersey Turnpike resulted in a chain reaction of vehicle collisions during the morning rush hour. A propane truck jackknifed and was struck by a trailer truck, and other vehicles piled into the fiery mass. (David Ludlum)

1975 - Red River was buried under 34 inches of snow in 24 hours, establishing a record for the state of New Mexico. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - The temperature at Bismarck, ND, plunged to 30 degrees below zero to establish their record low for the month of November. The high that day was 4 degrees below zero. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Snow blanketed the Upper Mississippi Valley, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior. Up to ten inches of snow was reported in Douglas County and Bayfield County of Wisconsin. Brule WI received nine inches of snow. Heavy rain soaked the Middle Atlantic Coast States, while gale force winds lashed the coastline. Flooding was reported in Maryland and Virginia. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Nine inches of snow at Alta UT brought their total for the month to 164 inches, surpassing their previous November record of 144 inches. Snowbird UT, also in the Little Cottonwood Valley, surpassed their November record of 118 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong Santa Ana winds diminished over southern California, but record cold was reported in some of the California valleys, with readings of 27 degrees at Redding and 31 degrees at Bakersfield. Gale force winds, gusting to 44 mph at Milwaukee WI, produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region. Sault Ste Marie MI finished the month of November with a record 46.8 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

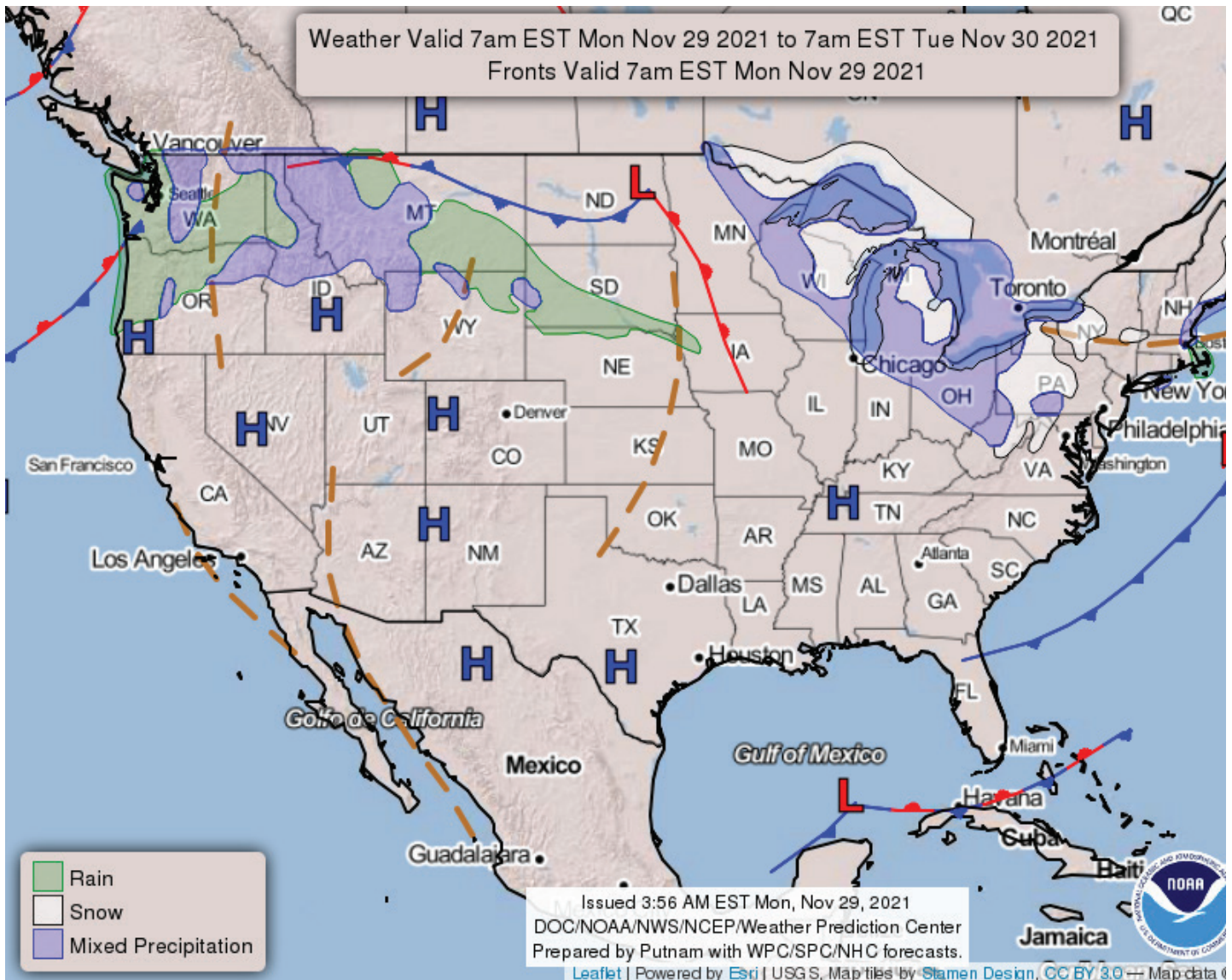
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 44.1 °F at 3:15 PM
Low Temp: 18.5 °F at 4:30 AM
Wind: 17 mph at 9:45 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 57° in 2017
Record Low: -26° in 1964
Average High: 36°F
Average Low: 14°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.72
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.16
Average Precip to date: 21.19
Precip Year to Date: 19.88
Sunset Tonight: 4:53:20 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49:33 AM



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RIGHT WAY - WRONG WAY

God created us to follow Him - not to forsake Him. He chooses for us triumph over temptation - not struggle with guilt for surrendering to sin. He wants us to walk with Him and not stray from Him because of our self-centeredness. He waits to help us achieve the potential He has given us and not be satisfied with less than what is possible. He is willing and able to share His wisdom and give His insights whenever we need to make any decision- if only we ask Him.

There are many wrong ways but only one "best" way - His way. And only God can reveal that way, His way, to us. We may search one way and then another, try this route, or another until it comes to a dead end. However, only when we allow God to lead us will we be in the center of His will.

Israel's experience during the Exodus gives us a great example of God's guidance and guardianship.

The Psalmist gives us a vivid picture of what can happen when people "try to make it on their own" and do not follow God: "Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. Some were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away." How sad. How true. Without God's guidance, we are all wanderers!

"Then they cried out to the Lord!" And listen to what happened. "He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle."

No one will ever find a "straight way" to a "safe place" in life unless they surrender their life to God and follow Him. Life without God is a "wasteland," and unless we accept His salvation, our lives will "ebb away."

Prayer: Lord, we come to You and ask You to save us from our sins and then lead us safely into Your presence. Thank you for guarding us as You guide us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Psalm 107:7

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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
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
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
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
Cancelled Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
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
09/18-19 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
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/11/2021 Veteran's Day Program at the GHS Arena
11/21/2021 Groton Area Snow Queen Contest
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
11/30/2021 James Valley Telecommunications Holiday Open House 10am-4pm
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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News from the Associated Press

Sanford diabetes study for children has tested 2,000-plus

By ALFONZO GALVAN Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A family history of diabetes prompted a Sioux Falls couple to enroll their children in clinical study on diabetes through Sanford Health.

To their surprise, the study found no signs of diabetes, but instead, a diagnosis of celiac disease in their 5-year-old daughter, Kemper.

Shane and Staci Vogel had Kemper and 2-year-old son Knox participate in Sanford Health's PLEDGE study, a large-scale screening of children under age 6 for type 1 diabetes and celiac disease, according to Sanford's website.

The project started a year ago in a few clinics with the goal of testing 1,000 children. A year later, the study has tested more than 2,000 children, Dr. Kurt Griffin, a researcher in the study, told the Argus Leader.

After Kemper's test was done in February, the family got the call in late March notifying them of Kemper's celiac disease diagnosis, to the surprise of her parents.

"I see diabetes a lot every day in the clinic that I work at, so I just wanted to make sure she (Kemper) didn't have it," Dr. Shane Vogel, an optometrist, said.

Celiac disease is a lifelong autoimmune disease in which eating foods or medicines containing gluten triggers the immune system to attack the small intestine.

Kemper Vogel didn't have any symptoms when diagnosed, but the family worked quickly to rid their home of any foods containing gluten. The next step was prepping their daughter for life outside of their home.

"At first, we told her she has a 'special tummy' so she can't have things with gluten in it," Staci Vogel said. "She right away was an advocate for herself."

Shane Vogel said the thing he worries most for his daughter is cross-contamination. The family doesn't go out to eat as much anymore, instead opting to cook at home. And while they initially got rid of all forms of gluten in their home, they've now stepped back.

The Vogel family keep normal bread and other food containing gluten in the home and gluten-free options for Kemper. She has her own toaster for her gluten-free bread, too. And anytime anybody feeds her, she makes sure to ask, "does this have gluten in it?"

"Such a smart little girl," Staci Vogel said. "It breaks my heart that she has to ask but she doesn't seem to mind."

Staci and Shane Vogel said they more or less "overlooked" the celiac disease test for Kemper, thinking diabetes was their biggest concern, but now both have adapted their outlook on food and its preparation thanks to Kemper's diagnosis.

"The hard part is when she asks all those questions she sees something other kids are having, a cupcake or something like that, and you have to say 'you can't have that,'" Shane Vogel said.

Kemper isn't in school yet, but she attends daycare and her parents make sure to pack alternative snacks.

The 5-year-old occasionally asks her dad, "Can you eat gluten?" and, "How come I can't eat gluten?"

"There's no good answer there; you just say, 'you're special,'" Shane Vogel said.

The PLEDGE study now includes more than 42 clinics after starting with just a handful a year ago, Griffin said. It includes all of Sanford Health's Sioux Falls clinics and others all the way up to Fargo, North Dakota.

Children under 6 can be enrolled in the study as long as they're currently going to Sanford Health for annual checkups and not diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, according to Sanford's website.

"This is being offered at no cost to the families," Griffin said. "We're doing this as a study to measure if someday we can say 'yes,' this is worth doing."

Due to the study's success in the first year, the age range of participants is being raised a few years, Griffin said.

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Leftist holds commanding lead in Honduran presidential vote

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Leftist opposition candidate Xiomara Castro held a commanding lead early Monday as Hondurans appeared poised to remove the conservative National Party from power after 12 years of continuous rule.

Castro declared herself the winner despite orders from the National Electoral Council to political parties to await official results.

"We win! We win!" Castro, Honduras' former first lady who is making her third presidential run, told cheering Liberty and Re-foundation party supporters when only a fraction of the ballots had been tallied. "Today the people have obtained justice. We have reversed authoritarianism."

The National Party also quickly declared victory for its candidate, Tegucigalpa Mayor Nasry Asfura, but the early returns were not promising.

By early Monday, Castro's wide early lead was holding up. With 51% of the polling station tallies in, Castro had 53% of the votes and Asfura 33%, according to the National Electoral Council preliminary count. With more than 1.8 million votes counted, Castro held a margin of more than 350,000 votes. The council said turnout was more than 68%.

On Sunday night, thousands of people packed the capital's Morazan Boulevard, blowing car horns, waving the Libre party's red flags and setting off fireworks. After midnight, the street continued to fill with Castro's celebrating supporters.

Anticipating vandalism, some businesses along the boulevard had covered their windows with wood or metal sheeting, but the celebration appeared peaceful.

In 2017, after a protracted election filled with irregularities, protesters filled the streets and the government imposed a curfew. Three weeks later now-outgoing President Juan Orlando Hernández was declared the winner despite the Organization of American States observation mission calling for an election re-do. At least 23 people were killed.

Late Sunday, Castro promised a permanent dialogue with the Honduran people and said beginning Monday she wanted to open conversations with all sectors of society and international organizations to seek solutions for the Central American country, which is recovering from two major hurricanes, troubled by gangs and enduring corruption and high poverty. Her husband, the former president who was ousted by a military coup in 2009, did not appear on stage with her, but her son and daughter were there.

Castro received a late surge of support when Salvador Nasralla, who lost to Hernández in 2017, ended his own candidacy and joined her alliance in October. The move took a three-way race that could have favored Asfura to just two.

Castro rode a wave of discontentment with the National Party's rule. Hernández became a national embarrassment with U.S. federal prosecutors in New York accusing him of running a narco state and fueling his own political rise with drug money. Hernández has denied it all and has not been formally charged, but that could change once he leaves office.

In addition to a new president, Hondurans on Sunday chose a new congress, new representatives to the Central American Parliament and a bevy of local races.

The Organization of American States observation mission said in a statement late Sunday that the voting had appeared to be "appropriate and peaceful."

Sunday's turnout was 10 points above that in 2017.

Wary, weary world slams doors shut, fearing omicron variant

By RAF CASERT and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Nations around the world sought Monday to keep the new omicron variant at bay with travel bans and further restrictions, even as it remains unclear what it means for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan announced it would suspend entry of all foreign visitors, while new cases of the variant identified days ago by researchers in South Africa appeared as far apart as Hong Kong, Australia and Portugal.

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Portuguese authorities were investigating whether some of the infections there could be among the first reported cases of local transmission of the variant outside of southern Africa.

The stream of new cases showed the near impossibility of keeping the genie in the bottle in a globalized world of travel and open borders.

Yet, many tried to do just that, even against the urging of the World Health Organization, which noted that border closures often have limited effect but can wreak havoc on lives and livelihoods. Some argued that such restrictions still could provide valuable time to analyze the new variant. Little is known about it, including whether it is more contagious, more likely to cause serious illness or more able to evade the protection of vaccines.

While the initial global response to COVID-19 was criticized as slow and haphazard, the reaction to the new variant came quickly.

"This time the world showed it is learning," said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, singling out South African President Cyril Ramaphosa for praise. "South Africa's analytic work and transparency and sharing its results was indispensable in allowing a swift global response. It no doubt saved many lives," she said.

The WHO has also praised South Africa and Botswana for quickly alerting the world to the presence of the new variant — and many have warned they should not be punished for their speed, especially since it may never be known when or where the new version first cropped up.

But that did not hold von der Leyen back from pushing the 27-nation European Union toward imposing an immediate ban on flights from seven southern African nations — similar to measures many countries have taken.

Cases had already been reported in Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands, before Portuguese authorities identified 13 cases of omicron among team members of the Belenenses professional soccer club. Authorities reported that one member recently traveled to South Africa. Its game against Benfica over the weekend had been abandoned at half time for lack of players.

Quarantining also became an issue when Dutch military police had to arrest a husband and wife who left a hotel where they were being held after testing positive and boarded a plane bound for Spain.

"Quarantine is not obligatory, but we assume people will act responsibly," spokeswoman Petra Faber said. Taking no chances, Japan, which has yet to detect any omicron cases, reimposed border controls that it eased earlier this month for short-term business visitors, foreign students and workers.

"We are taking the step as an emergency precaution to prevent a worst-case scenario in Japan," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said of the measure that begins Tuesday. Japan has kept its border closed to foreign tourists from all nations.

Israel decided to bar entry to foreigners, and Morocco said it would suspend all incoming flights for two weeks starting Monday.

Despite the global worry, scientists cautioned that it's still unclear whether omicron is more alarming than other versions of a virus that has killed more than 5 million people. And in some parts of the world, authorities were moving in the opposite direction.

In Malaysia, officials went ahead with the partial reopening of a bridge connecting it to the city-state of Singapore. And New Zealand announced it will continue plans to reopen internally after months of shut-down, though it is also restricting travel from nine southern African nations.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she didn't anticipate any further restrictions, and bars, restaurants and gyms in Auckland can reopen from late Thursday, ending a coronavirus lockdown that began in August.

"We've come through the past two years of COVID in better shape than nearly anywhere in the world," Ardern said, pointing to low death rates, a growing economy and high vaccination rates.

Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States, meanwhile, said no data as yet suggest the new variant causes more serious illness than previous COVID-19 variants.

Collins echoed several experts in saying the news should make everyone redouble their efforts to use the tools the world already has, including vaccinations, booster shots and measures such as mask-wearing.

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The U.S. is banning travel from South Africa and seven other southern African countries starting Monday. "It's going to give us a period of time to enhance our preparedness," the United States' top infectious diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said of the ban on ABC's "This Week."

Fauci says it will take approximately two more weeks to have more definitive information on the transmissibility, severity and other characteristics of omicron, according to a statement from the White House.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo. Associated Press journalists from around the world contributed to this report.

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

The Latest: Spain orders 10-day quarantine for some Africans

MADRID — Spain has imposed a 10-day mandatory quarantine for visitors coming from seven southern African countries, where omicron, a new coronavirus variant, was first been identified.

Spain's move comes as more and more countries are imposing travel restrictions, even though much remains unknown about omicron.

The mandatory isolation affects travelers from South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe who arrive in Spain directly or with stopovers in other countries.

Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said that more than 200 nationals who were in the region and whose flights have been cancelled will be brought back to Spain on flights that are still operating to parts of Europe.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

- 13 omicron cases discovered in Portuguese soccer club
- AP explains what is known and not known about the new COVID-19 variant
- Merriam-Webster chooses vaccine as the 2021 word of the year
- Why WHO skipped 'nu,' 'xi' for new COVID variant
- See all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

TOKYO — Japan announced Monday it will suspend entry of all foreign visitors from around the world as a new coronavirus variant spreads.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the measure will take effect Tuesday.

The decision means Japan will restore border controls that it eased earlier this month for short-term business visitors, foreign students and workers.

Over the weekend, Japan tightened entry restrictions for people arriving from South Africa and eight other countries, requiring them to undergo a 10-day quarantine period at government-designated facilities.

Many countries have moved to tighten their borders after the new omicron variant of the coronavirus was found in a number of nations.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — A school in Denmark was shut down after a new coronavirus variant was found in a student. The type of variant is still unknown, and it is being investigated, authorities said.

Because of the uncertainty surrounding what variant it is, the Danish Patient Safety Authority urged people to stay home and extensive tests were being made.

Two suspected cases of omicron, a new coronavirus variant believed to be more contagious, were detected on the weekend in people entering the Scandinavian country from South Africa. Both people have been isolated.

LONDON -- Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said there is evidence of local transmission of the new omicron variant of the coronavirus after the country reported its first six cases.

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She told a news conference that not all the cases in Scotland had links to recent travel, adding that this suggests "there might already be some community transmission of this variant in Scotland."

The new cases takes the U.K.'s total to nine after three cases were identified in England over the weekend.

The arrival of the variant on British shores prompted Prime Minister Boris Johnson to tighten restrictions on mask-wearing and testing of international arrivals to England.

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan's planning minister said a big vaccination campaign against coronavirus will be expedited this week to minimize the threat of the new variant.

Asad Umar warned that the new coronavirus variant known as omicron will inevitably come to the Islamic nation in the next few weeks, and he urged unvaccinated citizens to get their shots as soon as possible.

Umar said since the world is interconnected, it is impossible to stop the new variant from entering Pakistan.

LISBON, Portugal — Portuguese health authorities said they have identified 13 cases of omicron, the new coronavirus variant believed to be more contagious, among team members of a professional soccer club.

The Ricardo Jorge National Health Institute said Monday that one of those who tested positive at the Lisbon-based Belenenses soccer club had recently traveled to South Africa, where the omicron variant was first identified.

The others, however, hadn't traveled to South Africa, indicating that this may be one of the first cases of local transmission of the virus outside of southern Africa.

BUCHAREST, Romania — Romania wants to repatriate 39 of its citizens from South Africa, including members of a professional rugby team, amid suspended flights because of concerns over the omicron variant.

Romania's foreign ministry said it will organize a special repatriation flight and urged Romanian citizens in South Africa who want to leave the country to notify the authorities as soon as possible.

Romania's sports minister, Eduard Novak, said he has been in close contact with Romania's national champion rugby team whose members are in South Africa.

Stage set for Ghislaine Maxwell's sex trafficking trial

NEW YORK (AP) — Two years after Jeffrey Epstein's suicide behind bars, a jury is set to be picked Monday in New York City to determine a central question in the long-running sex trafficking case: Was his longtime companion, Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's puppet or accomplice?

Maxwell — who once dated the financier — is accused of acting as Epstein's chief enabler, recruiting and grooming young girls for him to abuse. The charges against her stem from the allegations of four women who say she and Epstein victimized them as teens from 1994 to 2004.

Prosecutors say there's evidence Maxwell knew that the victims, including a 14-year-old, were below the age of consent and that she arranged travel for some between Epstein's homes, including his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, his posh Manhattan townhouse and at other residences in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and London.

Epstein killed himself at a Manhattan federal lockup in August 2019, a month after his arrest on sex trafficking charges. Authorities charged Maxwell in July 2020, arresting her after tracking her to a \$1 million New Hampshire estate where she had been holed up during the coronavirus pandemic.

Maxwell has pleaded not guilty and vehemently denies wrongdoing. The 59-year-old British socialite, jailed in Brooklyn since her arrest, has called the claims against her "absolute rubbish." Maxwell's lawyers and family say she was Epstein's pawn, now paying "a blood price" to satisfy public desire to see someone held accountable for his crimes.

The first order of business Monday will be finalizing the selection of the 12 jurors and six alternates who will hear Maxwell's case. Jurors will be picked from a pool of 40 to 60 potential jurors who made it through initial questioning.

U.S. District Judge Alison Nathan instructed the prosecution and defense to submit lists of potential jurors

they want excluded from the trial. In selecting primary jurors, the defense will have 10 peremptory challenges and the prosecution will have six, Nathan said. For alternates, each side will get three challenges.

President Joe Biden recently nominated Nathan to a seat on the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals, but the judge said she will continue to preside over Maxwell's trial.

The wealthy, Oxford-educated Maxwell is the daughter of British newspaper magnate Robert Maxwell, who died in 1991 after falling off his yacht — named the Lady Ghislaine — near the Canary Islands. Robert Maxwell, whose holdings at the time included the New York Daily News, was facing allegations that he had illegally looted his businesses' pension funds.

Ghislaine Maxwell holds U.S., British and French citizenships and was repeatedly denied bail in the run-up to her trial.

Food, gas prices pinch families as inflation surges globally

By JUSTIN SPIKE, PAUL WISEMAN and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — From appliance stores in the United States to food markets in Hungary and gas stations in Poland, rising consumer prices fueled by high energy costs and supply chain disruptions are putting a pinch on households and businesses worldwide.

Rising inflation is leading to price increases for food, gas and other products and pushing many people to choose between digging deeper into their pockets or tightening their belts. In developing economies, it's especially dire.

"We've noticed that we're consuming less," Gabor Pardi, a shopper at an open-air food market in Hungary's capital, Budapest, said after buying a sack of fresh vegetables recently. "We try to shop for the cheapest and most economical things, even if they don't look as good."

Nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic impact of the crisis is still being felt even after countries raced out of debilitating lockdowns and consumer demand rebounded. Now, another surge of infections and a new coronavirus variant, omicron, are leading countries to tighten their borders and impose other restrictions, threatening the global economic recovery.

The reverberations are hitting central and Eastern Europe especially hard, where countries have some of the highest inflation rates in the 27-nation European Union and people are struggling to buy food or fill their fuel tanks.

A butcher at the Budapest food market, Ildiko Vardos Serfozo, said she's seen a drop in business as customers head to multinational grocery chains that can offer discounts by buying in large wholesale quantities.

"Buyers are price sensitive and therefore often leave us behind, even if our products are high quality. Money talks," she said. "We notice that inflation is not good for us. ... I'm just glad my kids don't want to continue this family business, I don't see much future in it."

In nearby Poland, Barbara Grotowska, a 71-year-old pensioner, said outside a discount supermarket in the capital of Warsaw that she's been hit hardest by her garbage collection fee nearly tripling to 88 zlotys (\$21). She also lamented that the cooking oil she uses has gone up by a third of its price, to 10 zlotys (\$2.40).

"That's a real difference," she said.

The recent pickup in inflation has caught business leaders and economists around the world by surprise.

In spring 2020, the coronavirus crushed the global economy: governments ordered lockdowns, businesses closed or slashed hours and families stayed home. Companies braced for the worst, canceling orders and putting off investments.

In an attempt to stave off economic catastrophe, wealthy countries — most notably the United States — introduced trillions of dollars worth of government aid, an economic mobilization on a scale unseen since World War II. Central banks also slashed interest rates in a bid to revive economic activity.

But those efforts to jump-start economies have had unintended consequences: as consumers felt more emboldened to spend the money they had received through government assistance or low-interest borrowing, and vaccine rollouts encouraged people to return to restaurants, bars and shops, the surge in demand tested the capacity of suppliers to keep pace.

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Ports and freight yards were suddenly clogged with shipments, and prices began to rise as global supply chains seized up — especially as new outbreaks of COVID-19 sometimes shut down factories and ports in Asia.

The rise in prices has been dramatic. Inflation in the United States surged to 6.2% in October, the highest since 1990, and the International Monetary Fund predicts that world consumer prices will rise 4.3% this year, the biggest jump since 2011.

It is most pronounced in the developing economies of central and Eastern Europe, with the highest annual rates recorded in Lithuania (8.2%), Estonia (6.8%) and Hungary (6.6%). In Poland, one of Europe's fastest-growing economies, inflation came in at 6.4% in October, the highest rate in two decades.

Several shoppers at a vegetable stand in Warsaw said they are anxious about rising prices for staples like bread and cooking oil and are expecting the situation to get worse in the new year, when energy prices are set to rise.

Piotr Molak, a 44-year-old vegetable vendor, said he has not yet had to raise prices on the potatoes, apples or carrots he sells but the cherry tomatoes he imports from Spain and Italy, which he buys in euros, have gotten far more expensive as Poland's currency, the zloty, has weakened.

"We will mostly feel this in the new year when electricity goes up," Molak said. "We are really going to feel it when we have to spend more on our home than on pleasure."

The weakening of currencies across central and Eastern Europe against the U.S. dollar and euro is pushing up the price of imports and fuel and exacerbating the pinch from supply backups and other factors.

Hungary's currency, the forint, has lost around 16% of its value against the dollar in the last six months and slipped to a historic low against the euro last week. That's part of a strategy by Hungary's central bank to keep the country competitive and attract foreign companies seeking cheap labor, said Zsolt Balassi, a portfolio manager at Hold Asset Management in Budapest.

But prices on imported goods have skyrocketed, and global oil prices set in U.S. dollars have pushed fuel costs to record levels.

"As the Hungarian forint, and actually all regional currencies, are more or less constantly weakening, this will constantly raise oil prices in our currencies," Balassi said.

In response to record fuel prices, which peaked this month at 506 forints (\$1.59) for gasoline and 512 forints (\$1.61) for diesel per liter, Hungary's government announced a 480-forint (\$1.50) cap at filling stations.

While giving some relief, Hungary's upcoming elections, in which the right-wing governing party faces the most serious challenge since it was elected in 2010, were likely a factor, Balassi said.

"This is obviously a political decision which has huge economic disadvantages, but probably it makes the households happy," he said.

The political nature of some economic decisions is not limited to Hungary.

Poland's central bank, also facing a weakening currency, has been accused by critics of allowing inflation to rise too high for too long to encourage economic growth and bolster support for the ruling party.

The bank surprised markets with the timing and size of two base interest rate hikes in October and November in a bid to ease prices, while Hungary's central bank has raised rates in smaller increments six times this year.

Still, if central banks move too aggressively too soon to control inflation, it could short-circuit the economic recovery, said Carmen Reinhart, chief economist at the World Bank.

She worries about higher food prices that primarily hurt the poor in developing countries, where a disproportionate share of family budgets goes toward keeping food on the table.

"Food prices are a barometer for social unrest," Reinhart said, noting that the Arab Spring uprisings that began in 2010 were caused partly by higher food prices.

Anna Andrzejczak, a 41-year-old who works for an environmental foundation in Poland, was still a child when Communism ended there in 1989 and has only a vague memory of the hyperinflation and other economic "tumult" that came with the transition to a market economy.

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But she feels the prices going up "every time I fill my tank," with fuel costs having risen some 35% in the last year.

"We've had a period of stability in past years, so this inflation now is a big shock," Andrzejczak said. "We don't have the price increases that we had then, but I think this will cause big stress."

Wiseman reported from Washington, and Gera from Warsaw, Poland.

EXPLAINER: Can world powers curb Iran in new nuclear talks?

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Can the landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers be restored? As Iran and six global powers gather in Vienna Monday to discuss the tattered treaty, the answer appears to be no.

Since then-President Donald Trump withdrew from the agreement in 2018, Iran has raced forward with its nuclear program, making it all but impossible to simply turn back the clock. The election of a hard-line leader in Iran, coupled with a U.S. administration seen as weak in the region, have further dampened prospects for a breakthrough.

The outlook appears so grim that prominent voices in Israel, which pushed Trump to withdraw from the deal, are now saying the move was a huge mistake.

Former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon, who fiercely opposed the original deal, was one of the rare Israeli voices to argue against withdrawal at the time. He now says the U.S. pullout has turned out to be the "main mistake" in the region of the past decade.

A flawed deal, he told a security conference last week, "probably was better than not having the agreement and to allow the Iranians to use the withdrawal as an excuse to go ahead with the project."

"Now they are in the closest stage they have been ever to become a (nuclear) threshold state," he said.

Here's a closer look at the deal and what to expect this week:

WHY DID THE ORIGINAL DEAL COLLAPSE?

The 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers -- spearheaded by President Barack Obama -- aimed to prevent Iran from being able to build a nuclear bomb. It offered Iran relief from crippling economic sanctions in exchange for curbs of 10 to 15 years on its nuclear activities. Iran says its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

Critics, led by then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, assailed the deal because the restrictions on Iran were temporary. They also complained it did not address Iran's non-nuclear military activity -- such as its support for hostile militant groups and development of long-range missiles.

When Trump withdrew, with strong urging from Netanyahu, he promised a campaign of "maximum pressure" on Iran. However, the approach appears to have backfired. Despite increased U.S. sanctions, Iran's government remains firmly in power, and the country has raced forward with nuclear research banned by the original deal.

CAN'T THE DEAL JUST BE REINSTATED?

Iran began exceeding the limits of the agreement after the U.S. withdrawal, and now enriches small amounts of uranium up to 60% purity — a short step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Iran also spins advanced centrifuges once barred by the accord and its uranium stockpile now far exceeds the accord's limits.

Experts say that even if Iran were forced to give up its uranium stockpile or halt its research, the expertise it has gained cannot be taken away.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THIS WEEK'S TALKS?

In the short term, it does not look encouraging. Heading into the talks, Iran's hard-line president, Ebrahim Raisi, has made maximalist demands, including calls for the U.S. to unfreeze \$10 billion in assets as an initial goodwill gesture.

The tough line might be an opening gambit. European negotiators remain confident a deal will be reached

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in the short to medium term.

But U.S. officials do not appear optimistic. President Joe Biden and his top advisers have held a series of meetings in recent weeks with key allies and negotiating partners to prepare for the possible failure of talks.

Because of Trump's withdrawal, the Americans won't even be in the negotiating room. Instead, they will be nearby and work through mediators.

In an interview broadcast Friday, chief U.S. negotiator Rob Malley said signs from Iran "are not particularly encouraging."

Speaking to NPR, he said the U.S. prefers a diplomatic solution. But if that is impossible, he said the U.S. will respond accordingly. "The options that are at America's disposal are, you know, they're familiar to all," he said.

Given the tepid U.S. response to alleged Iranian military activity in the region, including attacks on civilian shipping in the Persian Gulf and a strike on a U.S. base in Syria, U.S. military action does not seem to be a serious threat. The United States' bungled pullout from Afghanistan has further eroded American credibility in the region.

"I'm very pessimistic," said Yoel Guzansky, a former official in the Israeli prime minister's office who is now a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. "Iran shows patience, resilience, determination. I'm sorry to say the Americans don't show that, and we don't have a lot of time."

WHAT CAN ISRAEL DO?

Israel is not a party to the talks, but it has a huge stake in the outcome.

It considers Iran to be its No. 1 enemy and views a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential threat. Israel is believed to be the only nuclear-armed state in the region, though it does not publicly acknowledge its own arsenal.

Netanyahu's successor, Naftali Bennett, has been careful not to clash with Biden in public. But his positions are similar to Netanyahu's. He has expressed hope an improved deal would emerge from the talks but reiterated Israel's longstanding threat to take unilateral action if necessary.

"We will maintain our freedom to act," he said last week. On Sunday, he said Israel is "very disturbed" by what he sees as a willingness by the global powers to lift sanctions and reinstate "insufficient restrictions in the nuclear sphere." He said Israel has been passing this message to all concerned parties.

Despite such threats, Israel might hesitate. Iran has spent the past decade scattering its nuclear sites and hiding them deep underground. Plus, Israel might be reluctant to sabotage a global diplomatic effort.

IS IRAN OVERPLAYING ITS HAND?

China and Russia, two important Iranian outlets for trade and parties to the deal, could grow impatient with Tehran, especially if a now-shaky system of international nuclear inspections falls apart. Economic pressure continues to squeeze Iranians, who have seen their savings evaporate with the free-fall of the country's currency.

If talks drag on, the U.S. might turn to new sanctions or even military action. There's also the risk of a military intervention by Israel.

"We'll see in the coming days what exactly" Iran's approach will be, State Department spokesman Ned Price said last week. "But we've also been very clear that this is not a process that can go on indefinitely."

Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed reporting.

Interfaith love a risk amid India's Hindu nationalist surge

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

BELAGAVI, India (AP) — Arbaz Mullah's love story began, as romances often do, when he first laid eyes on the woman of his dreams, Shweta Kumbhar.

Over nearly three years, their courtship in many ways resembled that of any other couple: They went on

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dates and to movies, snapped selfies, frequented public parks, made each other promises to get married. But those secret vows would never be fulfilled.

The romance so angered relatives of Kumbhar, a Hindu, that they allegedly hired members of a hard-line Hindu nationalist group to kill 24-year-old Mullah, who was Muslim.

They did exactly that, according to police. On Sept. 28, his bloodied and dismembered body was found on a stretch of railroad tracks.

While interfaith unions between Hindus and Muslims are rare in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, and other Hindu nationalists have forcefully decried what they call "love jihad." The discredited conspiracy theory holds that supposedly predatory Muslim men deceive women to coerce them into changing their religion, with the ultimate aim of establishing domination in the majority-Hindu nation.

The "love jihad" issue has pitted the BJP against secular activists who warn it undermines constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and puts Muslims in the crosshairs of hard-line Hindu nationalists, emboldened by a prime minister who has mostly stayed mum about rising attacks on Muslims since he was first elected in 2014.

"This conspiracy theory demonizes the Muslim as the other and creates victimhood and fears in the Hindus that India is going to be converted into a Muslim country," said Mohan Rao, a retired professor of social sciences at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University who has researched interfaith marriages. "It's absurd."

Gopal Krishna Agarwal, a BJP spokesman, said the party has no objection in principle to interfaith marriages, which are legal, but suggested that concerns about "love jihad" are valid.

"BJP is not completely against interfaith marriages. Basically, it is an individual choice," Agarwal said. "But to lure somebody through financial means, or some coercion, or some sort of motive to convert, that is not acceptable."

India's National Investigation Agency and some court rulings have rejected the "love jihad" theory as baseless. Census data show the country's religious mix has been stable since 1951, and India remains predominantly Hindu with Muslims making up about 14% of its nearly 1.4 billion people.

Nonetheless, rights groups say violence against interfaith couples has increased in recent years, perpetrated by hard-line Hindu nationalists out to stop such relationships. Hundreds of Muslim men have been assaulted, and many couples have been forced to go into hiding. Some have been killed.

It was against that backdrop of fear that Mullah and Kumbhar began dating in 2018 in the city of Belagavi, in the southern state of Karnataka.

They hit it off instantly. But soon their conservative neighborhood was abuzz with gossip about a romance between a Hindu woman and Muslim man.

Mullah's mother, Nazima Shaikh, was worried. She was all too familiar with the frequent news stories about interfaith couples being targeted in Karnataka, which is governed by Modi's party.

"I was unsettled because I knew how it could end," Shaikh said.

She tried to persuade Mullah to end the relationship, but he refused. Their love was too great, and he was determined.

Meanwhile Kumbhar's family was aghast. Shaikh said she appealed to them to give the relationship their blessing but was told that "they will kill or get killed but won't let their daughter marry my son."

Soon, Mullah began receiving threatening calls. First they came from Kumbhar's family, then from members of the hard-line Hindu nationalist group Sri Ram Sena Hindustan, or Lord Ram's Army in India. They demanded money and for Mullah to break up with Kumbhar.

Kumbhar's parents also sought to stop her from seeing him, so the couple began meeting clandestinely in faraway towns and in fields in the countryside, according to friends.

When the threats grew, Mullah reluctantly agreed to end the relationship after being told it would mean he would no longer be bothered. But the couple continued to correspond in secret — and her family was incensed when they found out. It wasn't long before he was summoned to meet again with the members of Sri Ram Sena Hindustan.

Late that night the phone rang at Shaikh's home.

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"Life would never be the same," she said.

Investigators say that at the meeting, Sri Ram Sena Hindustan members bludgeoned Mullah with clubs and decapitated him using a knife. They then allegedly placed his body on the railroad tracks to try to make it look like he died when a train ran over him.

Ten people were soon arrested, though formal charges have yet to be brought. They include Kumbhar's parents, who according to senior investigator Laxman Nimbargi have confessed to paying the killers.

The Associated Press was unable to speak with Kumbhar. After a brief time in police custody, she is now staying with relatives who declined to make her available or even say where she is.

Sri Ram Sena Hindustan denied that its members killed Mullah and said the group is being targeted for "working for the benefit of Hindus."

Its leader, Ramakant Konduskar, who calls himself a foot soldier in the battle to save Hinduism, said he is not against any religion but people should marry within their own. He considers "love jihad" a threat to society.

"Our Hindu culture is thousands of years old," he said, "and we should preserve it and value it."

A 2020 Pew Research Center study found that roughly two-thirds of Hindus in India want to prevent their own from marrying outside the faith. An even larger share of Muslims, nearly 80%, said they favored preventing interreligious marriages.

Some jurisdictions governed by Modi's party have begun trying to codify that sentiment into law.

Last year lawmakers in Uttar Pradesh, a state headed by Hindu monk Yogi Adityanath, passed India's first "love jihad" bill, requiring couples from different religions to provide two months' notice to an official before getting married. The legislation applies to all interfaith marriages but primarily affects Muslims as Islam requires a non-Muslim to convert in order to sanctify the union.

Under the law it's up to the official to determine whether a conversion came about through compulsion, a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Because authorities can make couples' names public during the process, hard-liners have sometimes intervened to pressure women's families to bring charges of forced conversion.

Experts say proving the conversion is forced is not easy unless the woman acknowledges it because she invariably signs a statement before marriage saying she is willing.

So far nearly 100 people have been arrested under the law, though only a few have been convicted. Three other states governed by the BJP have introduced similar measures.

Critics say the bills violate the constitutional right to privacy. They also view the laws as deeply patriarchal in that they target Hindu women, portrayed as hapless victims of Muslim men.

"Women are not assets," said Renu Mishra, a lawyer and women's rights activist in Uttar Pradesh. "They can make their own decisions, and no one has the right to tell them whom to love and whom not to love."

Others worry the laws could further widen religious fault lines and accuse the BJP of stoking imaginary fears.

"What the love jihad theory does quite successfully is to introduce demographic anxieties, which is a politically potent weapon," said Rao, the retired professor.

Couples in major cities such as New Delhi and Mumbai are increasingly likely to eschew traditional norms such as arranged marriages and choose life partners irrespective of religion. Some liberal activists, most of them Hindus, have formed social and legal aid groups for interfaith couples and celebrate their stories on social media.

But in Belagavi, a relatively small city, such resources and support are lacking. Karnataka state has recently seen a rise in anti-Muslim attacks, exacerbating fears among the community.

In that environment, Mullah felt he had nowhere to turn, according to those close to him.

"Loving somebody is not a crime. It just happens. Nobody can plan it," said Hyder Khan, one of his friends. "But it is very difficult in these times to be a Muslim and to fall in love with someone from another religion."

Another friend, Muzaffar Tinwal, recalled speeding to the scene on his motorcycle after learning of the killing. Taking it in, he said, his "mind stopped working."

Mullah's decapitated body lay on the ground, hands lashed together tightly behind the back, his head was at the edge of the railroad tracks and his severed legs were scattered about.

It was Tinwal who phoned Shaikh with the news that night. The next morning, police called her to identify the body.

"My son made a terrible mistake of loving a Hindu woman," Shaikh said on a recent afternoon at her modest home in a congested neighborhood where webs of electrical wires crisscross the streets. She paused, searching for the right words, before continuing, "Is this what you get for loving someone?"

Associated Press journalists Shonal Ganguly, Aijaz Rahi and Chonchui Ngashangva contributed to this report.

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Supreme Court set to take up all-or-nothing abortion fight

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both sides are telling the Supreme Court there's no middle ground in Wednesday's showdown over abortion. The justices can either reaffirm the constitutional right to an abortion or wipe it away altogether.

Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 ruling that declared a nationwide right to abortion, is facing its most serious challenge in 30 years in front of a court with a 6-3 conservative majority that has been remade by three appointees of President Donald Trump.

"There are no half measures here," said Sherif Girgis, a Notre Dame law professor who once served as a law clerk for Justice Samuel Alito.

A ruling that overturned Roe and the 1992 case of Planned Parenthood v. Casey would lead to outright bans or severe restrictions on abortion in 26 states, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights.

The case being argued Wednesday comes from Mississippi, where a 2018 law would ban abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, well before viability. The Supreme Court has never allowed states to ban abortion before the point at roughly 24 weeks when a fetus can survive outside the womb.

The justices are separately weighing disputes over Texas' much earlier abortion ban, at roughly six weeks, though those cases turn on the unique structure of the law and how it can be challenged in court, not the abortion right. Still, abortion rights advocates were troubled by the court's 5-4 vote in September to allow the Texas law, which relies on citizen lawsuits to enforce it, to take effect in the first place.

"This is the most worried I've ever been," said Shannon Brewer, who runs the only abortion clinic in Mississippi, the Jackson Women's Health Organization.

The clinic offers abortions up to 16 weeks of pregnancy and about 10% of abortions it performs take place after the 15th week, Brewer said.

She also noted that since the Texas law took effect, the clinic has seen a substantial increase in patients, operating five days or six days a week instead of two or three.

Lower courts blocked the Mississippi law, as they have other abortion bans that employ traditional enforcement methods by state and local officials.

The Supreme Court had never before even agreed to hear a case over a pre-viability abortion ban. But after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death last year and her replacement by Justice Amy Coney Barrett, the third of Trump's appointees, the court said it would take up the case.

Trump had pledged to appoint "pro-life justices" and predicted they would lead the way in overturning the abortion rulings. Only one justice, Clarence Thomas, has publicly called for Roe to be overruled.

The court could uphold the Mississippi law without explicitly overruling Roe and Casey, an outcome that would satisfy neither side.

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Abortion-rights advocates say that result would amount to the same thing as an outright ruling overturning the earlier cases because it would erase the rationale undergirding nearly a half-century of Supreme Court law.

"A decision upholding this ban is tantamount to overruling Roe. The ban prohibits abortion around two months before viability," said Julie Rikelman, who will argue the case for the clinic.

On the other side, abortion opponents argue that the court essentially invented abortion law in Roe and Casey, and shouldn't repeat that mistake in this case.

If the justices uphold Mississippi's law, they'll have to explain why, said Thomas Jipping, a Heritage Foundation legal fellow. They can either overrule the two big cases, Jipping said, "or they're going to have to come up with another made-up rule."

Conservative commentator Ed Whelan said such an outcome would be a "massive defeat" on par with the Casey decision in 1992, in which a court with eight justices appointed by Republican presidents unexpectedly reaffirmed Roe.

This court appears far more conservative than the one that decided Casey, and legal historian Mary Ziegler at Florida State University's law school, said the court probably would "overrule Roe or set us on a path to doing so."

Chief Justice John Roberts might find the more incremental approach appealing if he can persuade a majority of the court to go along. Since Roberts became chief justice in 2005, the court has moved in smaller steps on some issues, even when it appeared there was only a binary choice.

It took two cases for the court to rip out the heart of the federal Voting Rights Act that curbed potentially discriminatory voting laws in states with a history of discrimination.

In the area of organized labor, the court moved through a series of cases that chipped away at public sector unions' power.

The high court also heard two rounds of arguments over restrictions on independent spending in the political arena before removing limits on how much money corporations and unions can pour into election advocacy.

If the court looks to public sentiment, it would find poll after poll that shows support for preserving Roe, though some surveys also find backing for greater restrictions on abortion.

Mississippi is one of 12 states ready to act almost immediately if Roe is overturned. Those states have enacted so-called abortion trigger laws that would take effect and ban all or nearly all abortions.

Women in those states wanting abortions could face drives of hundreds of miles to reach the nearest clinic or they might obtain abortion pills by mail. Medication abortions now account for 40% of abortions.

Some legal briefs in the case make clear that the end of Roe is not the ultimate goal of abortion opponents.

The court should recognize that "unborn children are persons" under the Constitution's 14th Amendment, a conclusion that would compel an end to almost all legal abortions, Princeton professor Robert George and scholar John Finnis wrote. Finnis was Justice Neil Gorsuch's adviser on his Oxford dissertation, an argument against assisted suicide.

Merriam-Webster chooses vaccine as the 2021 word of the year

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With an expanded definition to reflect the times, Merriam-Webster has declared an omnipresent truth as its 2021 word of the year: vaccine.

"This was a word that was extremely high in our data every single day in 2021," Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor-at-large, told The Associated Press ahead of Monday's announcement.

"It really represents two different stories. One is the science story, which is this remarkable speed with which the vaccines were developed. But there's also the debates regarding policy, politics and political affiliation. It's one word that carries these two huge stories," he said.

The selection follows "vax" as word of the year from the folks who publish the Oxford English Dictionary. And it comes after Merriam-Webster chose "pandemic" as tops in lookups last year on its online site.

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"The pandemic was the gun going off and now we have the aftereffects," Sokolowski said.

At Merriam-Webster, lookups for "vaccine" increased 601% over 2020, when the first U.S. shot was administered in New York in December after quick development, and months of speculation and discussion over efficacy. The world's first jab occurred earlier that month in the UK.

Compared to 2019, when there was little urgency or chatter about vaccines, Merriam-Webster logged an increase of 1,048% in lookups this year. Debates over inequitable distribution, vaccine mandates and boosters kept interest high, Sokolowski said. So did vaccine hesitancy and friction over vaccine passports.

The word "vaccine" wasn't birthed in a day, or due to a single pandemic. The first known use stretches back to 1882 but references pop up earlier related to fluid from cowpox pustules used in inoculations, Sokolowski said. It was borrowed from the New Latin "vaccina," which goes back to Latin's feminine "vac-cinus," meaning "of or from a cow." The Latin for cow is "vacca," a word that might be akin to the Sanskrit "vasa," according to Merriam-Webster.

Inoculation, on the other hand, dates to 1714, in one sense referring to the act of injecting an "inoculum."

Earlier this year, Merriam-Webster added to its online entry for "vaccine" to cover all the talk of mRNA vaccines, or messenger vaccines such as those for COVID-19 developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

While other dictionary companies choose words of the year by committee, Merriam-Webster bases its selection on lookup data, paying close attention to spikes and, more recently, year-over-year increases in searches after weeding out evergreens. The company has been declaring a word of the year since 2008. Among its runners-up in the word biography of 2021:

INSURRECTION: Interest was driven by the deadly Jan. 6 siege on the U.S. Capitol. Arrests continue, as do congressional hearings over the attack by supporters of President Donald Trump. Some of Trump's allies have resisted subpoenas, including Steve Bannon.

Searches for the word increased by 61,000% over 2020, Sokolowski said.

INFRASTRUCTURE: President Joe Biden was able to deliver what Trump often spoke of but never achieved: A bipartisan infrastructure bill signed into law. When Biden proposed help with broadband access, eldercare and preschool, conversation changed from not only roads and bridges but "figurative infrastructure," Sokolowski said.

"Many people asked, what is infrastructure if it's not made out of steel or concrete? Infrastructure, in Latin, means underneath the structure," he said.

PERSEVERANCE: It's the name of NASA's latest Mars rover. It landed Feb. 18, 2021. "Perseverance is the most sophisticated rover NASA has ever sent to the Red Planet, with a name that embodies NASA's passion, and our nation's capability, to take on and overcome challenges," the space agency said.

The name was thought up by Alexander Mather, a 14-year-old seventh-grader at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia. He participated in an essay contest organized by NASA. He was one of 28,000 K-12 students to submit entries.

NOMAD: The word had its moment with the 2020 release of the film "Nomadland." It went on to win three Oscars in April 2021, including best picture, director (Chloé Zhao) and actress (Frances McDormand). Zhao became the first woman of color to win best director.

The AP's film writer Jake Coyle called the indie success "a plain-spoken meditation on solitude, grief and grit. He wrote that it "struck a chord in a pandemic-ravaged year. It made for an unlikely Oscar champ: A film about people who gravitate to the margins took center stage."

Other words in Merriam-Webster's Top 10: Cicada (we had an invasion), guardian (the Cleveland Indians became the Cleveland Guardians), meta (the lofty new name of Facebook's parent company), cisgender (a gender identity that corresponds to one's sex assigned at birth), woke (charged with politics and political correctness) and murraya (a tropical tree and the word that won the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee for 14-year-old Zaila Avant-garde).

Follow Leanne Italie on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/litalie>

Brothers to take center stage in Jussie Smollett trial

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Two brothers stand at the center of the case that prosecutors will lay before jurors when the trial of Jussie Smollett begins this week.

The former "Empire" actor contends he was the victim of a racist and homophobic assault in downtown Chicago on a frigid night in January 2019. The siblings, who worked with him on the TV show, say he paid them \$3,500 to pose as his attackers.

Smollett is accused of lying to police about the alleged attack and has been charged with felony disorderly conduct. A class 4 felony, the crime carries a sentence of up to three years in prison but experts have said it is more likely that if Smollett is convicted he would be placed on probation and perhaps ordered to perform community service.

Whether the Black and openly gay Smollett testifies remains an open question. But the siblings, Abimbola and Olabinjo Osundairo, will take the witness stand where they are expected to repeat what they have told police officers and prosecutors — that they carried out the attack at Smollett's behest.

Jurors also may see surveillance video from more than four dozen cameras that police reviewed to trace the brothers' movements before and after the reported attack, as well as a video showing the brothers purchasing a red hat, ski masks and gloves from a beauty supply shop hours earlier.

Smollett's attorneys have not spelled out how they will confront that evidence and the lead attorney, Nenyé Uche, declined to comment. But there are clues as to how they might during the trial, which starts with jury selection Monday in a Chicago courtroom. It is expected to last a week.

Buried in nearly 500 pages of Chicago Police Department reports is a statement from a woman who lived in the area who says she saw a white man with "reddish brown hair" who appeared to be waiting for someone that night.

She told a detective that when the man turned away from her, she "could see hanging out from underneath his jacket what appeared to be a rope."

Her comments could back up Smollett's contention that his attackers draped a makeshift noose around his neck. Further, if she testified that the man was white, it would support Smollett's statements — widely ridiculed because the brothers, who come from Nigeria, are Black — that he saw pale or white skin around the eyes of one of his masked attackers.

One of the defense attorneys, Tina Glandian, suggested during a March 2019 appearance on NBC's "Today" show, that one of the brothers could have used white makeup around his eyes to make Smollett believe he was white. To address skepticism on the jury, Glandian could ask the brothers about a video she talked about on the program that she said shows one of them in whiteface reciting a monologue by the Joker character from a movie.

Given there is so much evidence, including the brothers' own statements, that they participated in the attack, it is not likely that Smollett's attorneys will try to prove they did not take part. That could perhaps lead the defense to contend that Smollett was the victim of a very real attack at the hands of the brothers, perhaps with the help of others, who now are only implicating the actor so prosecutors won't charge them, too.

Their \$3,500 check could be key. While the brothers say that was their fee to carry out the fake attack, Smollett has offered a different and much more innocent explanation: that he wrote the check to pay one of them to work as his personal trainer.

"I would assume the defense is going to zero in on that," said Joe Lopez, a prominent defense attorney not involved with the case. "If they texted messages regarding training sessions, checks he (Smollett) wrote them for training, photographs, the defense would use all of that."

What they will almost certainly do is attack the brothers' credibility — an effort that will certainly include a reminder to the jury that the brothers are not facing the same criminal charges as Smollett, despite admitting to taking part in the staged attack.

"Everything Smollett is responsible for, they are responsible for," said David Erickson, a former state

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appellate judge who teaches at Chicago Kent College of Law and who is not involved in the case. "They participated and they walk away? What the hell is that?"

Erickson said he expects prosecutors to confront that issue before Smollett's attorneys do, as they won't want to appear to be trying to hide something.

Finally, Smollett's career could take center stage. On one side, prosecutors could make the same point that then-Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson made when he announced Smollett's arrest in 2019: that Smollett thought the attack would gain him more fame and get him a raise on a hit TV show.

But Lopez said the defense attorneys might ask the jury the same question he has asked himself. "How would that help him with anything?" he asked. "He's already a star."

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the Jussie Smollett case.

More omicron cases pop up as world rushes to learn more

By MIKE CORDER, GEIR MOULSON and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Cases of the omicron variant of the coronavirus popped up in countries on opposite sides of the world Sunday and many governments rushed to close their borders even as scientists cautioned that it's not clear if the new variant is more alarming than other versions of the virus.

The variant was identified days ago by researchers in South Africa, and much is still not known about it, including whether it is more contagious, more likely to cause serious illness or more able to evade the protection of vaccines. But many countries rushed to act, reflecting anxiety about anything that could prolong the pandemic that has killed more than 5 million people.

Israel decided to bar entry to foreigners, and Morocco said it would suspend all incoming flights for two weeks starting Monday — among the most drastic of a growing raft of travel curbs being imposed by nations around the world as they scrambled to slow the variant's spread. Scientists in several places — from Hong Kong to Europe to North America — have confirmed its presence. The Netherlands reported 13 omicron cases on Sunday, and both Canada and Australia each found two.

Noting that the variant has already been detected in many countries and that closing borders often has limited effect, the World Health Organization called for frontiers to remain open.

Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States, meanwhile, emphasized that there is no data yet that suggests the new variant causes more serious illness than previous COVID-19 variants.

"I do think it's more contagious when you look at how rapidly it spread through multiple districts in South Africa. It has the earmarks therefore of being particularly likely to spread from one person to another. ... What we don't know is whether it can compete with delta," Collins said on CNN's "State of the Union."

Collins echoed several experts in saying the news should make everyone redouble their efforts to use the tools the world already has, including vaccinations, booster shots and measures such as mask-wearing.

"I know, America, you're really tired about hearing those things, but the virus is not tired of us," Collins said.

The Dutch public health authority confirmed that 13 people who arrived from South Africa on Friday have so far tested positive for omicron. They were among 61 people who tested positive for the virus after arriving on the last two flights to Amsterdam's Schiphol airport before a flight ban was implemented. They were immediately put into isolation, most at a nearby hotel.

Canada's health minister says the country's first two cases of omicron were found in Ontario after two individuals who had recently traveled from Nigeria tested positive.

Authorities in Australia said two travelers who arrived in Sydney from Africa became the first in the country to test positive for the new variant. Arrivals from nine African countries are now required to quarantine in a hotel upon arrival. Two German states reported a total of three cases in returning travelers over the weekend.

Israel moved to ban entry by foreigners and mandate quarantine for all Israelis arriving from abroad.

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And Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday that Japan is considering stepping up border controls. Kishida told reporters that he planned to announce new measures in addition to the current 10-day quarantine requirement for travelers from South Africa and eight other nearby countries. Japan still has its border closed to foreign tourists from any country.

Morocco's Foreign Ministry tweeted Sunday that all incoming air travel to the North African country would be suspended to "preserve the achievements realized by Morocco in the fight against the pandemic, and to protect the health of citizens." Morocco has been at the forefront of vaccinations in Africa, and kept its borders closed for months in 2020 because of the pandemic.

The U.S. plans to ban travel from South Africa and seven other southern African countries starting Monday. "It's going to give us a period of time to enhance our preparedness," the United States' top infectious diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said of the ban on ABC's "This Week."

Many countries are introducing such bans, though they go against the advice of the WHO, which has warned against any overreaction before the variant is thoroughly studied.

Fauci says it will take approximately two more weeks to have more definitive information on the transmissibility, severity and other characteristics of omicron, according to a statement from the White House.

South Africa's government responded angrily to the travel bans, which it said are "akin to punishing South Africa for its advanced genomic sequencing and the ability to detect new variants quicker."

The WHO sent out a statement saying it "stands with African nations" and noting that travel restrictions may play "a role in slightly reducing the spread of COVID-19 but place a heavy burden on lives and livelihoods." It said if restrictions are put in place, they should be scientifically based and not intrusive.

In Europe, much of which already has been struggling recently with a sharp increase in cases, officials were on guard.

The U.K. on Saturday tightened rules on mask-wearing and on testing of international arrivals after finding two omicron cases, but British Health Secretary Sajid Javid said the government was nowhere near reinstating work from home or more severe social-distancing measures.

"We know now those types of measures do carry a very heavy price, both economically, socially, in terms of non-COVID health outcomes such as impact on mental health," he told Sky News.

Spain announced it won't admit unvaccinated British visitors starting Dec. 1. Italy was going through lists of airline passengers who arrived in the past two weeks. France is continuing to push vaccinations and booster shots.

David Hui, a respiratory medicine expert and government adviser on the pandemic in Hong Kong, agreed with that strategy.

He said the two people who tested positive for the omicron variant had received the Pfizer vaccine and exhibited very mild symptoms, such as a sore throat.

"Vaccines should work but there would be some reduction in effectiveness," he said.

Moulson reported from Berlin, Collins from Columbia, South Carolina. Zen Soo in Hong Kong, Adam Schreck in Bangkok and Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

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

Northwest residents urged to stay alert as storms roll in

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

Weather officials urged Northwest residents to remain alert Sunday as more rain was predicted to fall in an area with lingering water from extreme weather earlier this month.

"There's some good news and some pending news," said Steve Reedy, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Seattle.

The weather service on Saturday warned that flooding was possible through Sunday in northwestern Washington, but an atmospheric river — a huge plume of moisture extending over the Pacific and into the

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Northwest — moved farther north into Canada than expected overnight.

"The impacts weren't quite as bad as we were anticipating during the overnight period," Reedy said.

After a respite, rain reentered the area later Sunday, which could cause some "nuisance flooding," he said.

"The flooding isn't going to be quite as bad as we were expecting 24 hours ago, but it still looks like some rivers up there could get into minor, maybe even moderate flooding," Reedy said.

The big question was how some communities, which saw heavy damage earlier from the previous storm, would fare.

People in the small communities of Sumas and Everson in northwest Washington were asked to evacuate voluntarily Saturday night, The Bellingham Herald reported. Both towns near the Canadian border saw extreme flooding from the previous storm.

The Nooksack River topped Main Street in Everson on Sunday afternoon, Everson Mayor John Perry told The Associated Press.

Perry was hopeful flooding wouldn't end up being as dramatic as anticipated, but the uncertainty of the bottom of the river from the last flood made him nervous.

"I think we're overprepared right now," he said. "We're monitoring it very carefully."

The rain slowed down later in the day and Main Street's flooding was about a foot deep, he said.

"At this point, it appears things are stable and there's no cause for alarm," Perry said.

Sumas resident Duane DeWaard said his garage flooded a couple of inches during the last flood. He put sandbags at the garage doors and braced for more rain to come Sunday.

"Sumas so far is doing OK," he said.

November has been wet for northwest Washington. Bellingham recorded 11.64 inches (29.56 centimeters) at midnight Sunday — an all-time record for the month, the weather service said.

A station at Quillayute Airport on the north coast got 27.8 inches (70.6 centimeters) and could likely break a 1983 record of 29.14 inches (74.01 centimeters) for November, Reedy said.

One concern overnight is the threat of landslides, said Gary Schneider, another meteorologist with the weather service in Seattle. There were also flood warnings in effect for some local rivers.

Reedy cautioned not driving into standing water on roadways near rivers.

"It doesn't take a lot of water to push your car around — or truck," he said. "Some people think just because they have a large truck, they can mow through. That's not always the case."

While rain will taper off Monday, another system is headed to the area starting Tuesday and spilling into Wednesday, Reedy said.

"On the bright side of things, it does still look like after we get into Wednesday, conditions look dry after the second half of the week," he said. "So hopefully there's some light at the end of the tunnel."

WHO criticizes travel bans on southern African countries

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The World Health Organization on Sunday urged countries around the world not to impose flight bans on southern African nations due to concerns over the new omicron variant.

WHO's regional director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, called on countries to follow science and international health regulations in order to avoid using travel restrictions.

"Travel restrictions may play a role in slightly reducing the spread of COVID-19 but place a heavy burden on lives and livelihoods," Moeti said in a statement. "If restrictions are implemented, they should not be unnecessarily invasive or intrusive, and should be scientifically based, according to the International Health Regulations, which is a legally binding instrument of international law recognized by over 190 nations."

Moeti praised South Africa for following international health regulations and informing WHO as soon as its national laboratory identified the omicron variant.

"The speed and transparency of the South African and Botswana governments in informing the world of the new variant is to be commended," said Moeti. "WHO stands with African countries which had the courage to boldly share life-saving public health information, helping protect the world against the spread

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of COVID-19.”

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa called the restrictions “completely unjustified.”

“The prohibition of travel is not informed by science, nor will it be effective in preventing the spread of this variant,” said in a speech Sunday evening. “The only thing the prohibition on travel will do is to further damage the economies of the affected countries, and undermine the ability to respond to, and also to recover from, the pandemic.”

Cases of the omicron variant of the coronavirus popped up in countries on opposite sides of the world Sunday and many governments rushed to close their borders even as scientists cautioned that it’s not clear if the new variant is more alarming than other versions of the virus.

While investigations continue into the omicron variant, WHO recommends that all countries “take a risk-based and scientific approach and put in place measures which can limit its possible spread.”

Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States, emphasized that there is no data yet that suggests the new variant causes more serious illness than previous COVID-19 variants.

“I do think it’s more contagious, when you look at how rapidly it spread through multiple districts in South Africa,” Collins said on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

Israel decided to bar entry to foreigners, and Morocco said it would suspend all incoming flights for two weeks starting Monday — among the most drastic of a growing raft of travel curbs being imposed as nations scrambled to slow the variant’s spread. Scientists in several places — from Hong Kong to Europe — have confirmed its presence. The Netherlands reported 13 omicron cases on Sunday, and Australia found two.

The U.S. plans to ban travel from South Africa and seven other southern African countries starting Monday.

“With the omicron variant now detected in several regions of the world, putting in place travel bans that target Africa attacks global solidarity,” said Moeti. “COVID-19 constantly exploits our divisions. We will only get the better of the virus if we work together for solutions.”

WHO said it scaling up its support for genomic sequencing in Africa so sequencing laboratories have access to adequate human resources and testing reagents to work at full capacity. WHO also said is ready to offer additional help, reinforcing COVID-19 responses including surveillance, treatment, infection prevention and community engagement in southern African countries, it said.

Follow all AP stories on the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

Phil Saviano, key clergy sex abuse whistleblower, dies at 69

By WILLIAM J. KOLE Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Phil Saviano, a clergy sex abuse survivor and whistleblower who played a pivotal role in exposing decades of predatory assaults by Roman Catholic priests in the United States, has died. He was 69.

Saviano’s story figured prominently in the 2015 Oscar-winning film “Spotlight” about The Boston Globe’s investigation that revealed how scores of priests molested children and got away with it because church leaders covered it up. He died on Sunday after a battle with gallbladder cancer, said his brother and caregiver, Jim Saviano.

In late October, Phil Saviano announced on his Facebook page that he was starting hospice care at his brother’s home in Douglas, Massachusetts, where he died.

“Things have been dicey the last few weeks,” he wrote, asking followers to “give a listen to Judy Collins singing ‘Bird On A Wire’ and think of me.”

Saviano played a central role in illuminating the scandal, which led to the resignation of Boston’s Cardinal Bernard Law and church settlements with hundreds of victims. The Globe’s 2002 series earned it the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2003, and “Spotlight” won Academy Awards for best picture and best original screenplay. Actor Neal Huff played Saviano in the film.

“My gift to the world was not being afraid to speak out,” Saviano said in mid-November in a brief telephone interview with The Associated Press.

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Born June 23, 1952, Saviano recalled going to confession as a young boy at St. Denis Church in tiny East Douglas, Massachusetts, in the 1960s and whispering his transgressions through a screen to the Rev. David Holley. The priest, he said, violated that sacred trust and forced the 11-year-old to perform sex acts. Holley died in a New Mexico prison in 2008 while serving a 275-year sentence for molesting eight boys.

"When we were kids, the priests never did anything wrong. You didn't question them, same as the police," brother Jim Saviano told the AP. "There were many barriers put in his way intentionally and otherwise by institutions and generational thinking. That didn't stop him. That's a certain kind of bravery that was unique."

A self-described "recovering Catholic," Saviano went on to establish the New England chapter of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, or SNAP, an organization working to bring specific allegations of clergy sexual abuse to light.

His faith in the church shattered, Saviano instead leaned on politicians and prosecutors to bring offenders to justice.

"We're putting our faith in legislators and prosecutors to solve this problem," he told reporters in 2002.

"Phil was an essential source during the Spotlight Team's reporting on the cover-up of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, providing other critical sources, research materials and the names of several accused priests," said Mike Rezendes, a member of the Globe team that brought the scandal to light and a current AP investigative reporter.

"He also shared his own heartbreaking story of abuse, imbuing us with the iron determination we needed to break this horrific story," Rezendes said. "During our reporting, and over the last 20 years, I got to know Phil well and have never met anyone as brave, as compassionate or as savvy."

Saviano earned degrees in zoology and communications from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Boston University and began working in hospital public relations. Later, he shifted to entertainment industry publicity and concert promotion, working closely with Collins, a lifelong friend and confidante, as well as Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Torme and other artists.

In 1991, he became seriously ill with AIDS and went public with his childhood abuse the following year, becoming one of the first survivors to come forward.

"Father Holley forced me and two of my friends to have repeated sexual contact with him," Saviano said in an interview with the Globe — the first of many that would lead not only to criminal charges against the disgraced cleric but widespread prosecutions of others as the enormity of the scandal became evident.

By the early 2000s, Saviano was spending 10 hours a day on the phone with victims and journalists. He was an outspoken critic of the Vatican's reluctance to deal decisively with the fallout from the scandal. In 2008, when Pope Benedict XVI hinted to U.S. bishops during a visit that they'd mishandled the church's response, Saviano questioned the pontiff's decision to follow his remarks with Masses in New York and Washington.

"If he was really serious about the issue, that Mass would not be held in New York. It would be held here in Boston," he said.

In 2009, suffering kidney failure and unable to locate a match among family or friends, he found a donor after SNAP spread the word in a nationwide email to 8,000 clergy sex abuse survivors.

The abuse that came to light as a result of Saviano's work prompted Cardinal Law, Boston's highest-ranking churchman, to step down. The Globe's reporting showed Law was aware of child molesters in the priesthood but covered up their crimes and failed to stop them, instead transferring them from parish to parish without alerting parents or police.

When the archbishop died in Rome in 2017, Saviano asked bluntly: "How is he going to explain this when he comes face to face with his maker?"

In 2019, at the Vatican for an abuse prevention summit called convened by Pope Francis, Saviano said he told summit organizers to release the names of abusive priests around the world along with their case files.

"Do it to launch a new era of transparency. Do it to break the code of silence. Do it out of respect for the victims of these men, and do it to help prevent these creeps from abusing any more children," he said.

Although there was a hard edge to much of his life, Saviano enjoyed traveling extensively and devel-

oped a soft spot for Indigenous art. In 1999, he launched an e-commerce website, Viva Oaxaca Folk Art, showcasing handmade decorative pieces he purchased on trips to southern Mexico and resold to collectors across the U.S.

He is survived by three brothers, Jim Saviano of Douglas; John Saviano of Douglas; and Victor Saviano of Boston; two nieces; and two nephews. A funeral Mass was scheduled for Friday at St. Denis Church in East Douglas.

Fashion designer Virgil Abloh dies of cancer at 41

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Virgil Abloh, a leading designer whose groundbreaking fusions of streetwear and high couture made him one of the most celebrated tastemakers in fashion and beyond, has died of cancer. He was 41.

Abloh's death was announced Sunday by the luxury group LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy) and Abloh's own Off-White label, which he founded in 2013. Abloh was the artistic director for Louis Vuitton's menswear, but his ubiquitous, consumer-friendly presence in culture was wide-ranging and dynamic. Some compared him to Jeff Koons. Others hailed him as his generation's Karl Lagerfeld.

"We are all shocked after this terrible news. Virgil was not only a genius designer, a visionary, he was also a man with a beautiful soul and great wisdom," Bernard Arnault, chairman and chief executive of LVMH, said in a statement.

A statement from Abloh's family on the designer's Instagram account said Abloh was diagnosed two years ago with cardiac angiosarcoma, a rare form of cancer in which a tumor occurs in the heart.

"He chose to endure his battle privately since his diagnosis in 2019, undergoing numerous challenging treatments, all while helming several significant institutions that span fashion, art, and culture," the statement read.

In 2018, Abloh became the first Black artistic director of men's wear at Louis Vuitton in the French design house's storied history. A first generation Ghanaian American whose seamstress mother taught him to sew, Abloh had no formal fashion training but had a degree in engineering and a master's in architecture.

Abloh, who grew up in Rockford, Illinois, outside of Chicago, was often referred to as a Renaissance man in the fashion world. He moonlighted as a DJ. But in a short time, he emerged as one of fashion's most heralded designers. Abloh called himself "a maker." He was named one of Time magazine's most influential people in 2018.

In 2009, Abloh met Kanye West — now called Ye — while he was working at a screen-printing store. After he and Ye interned together at the LVMH brand Fendi, Abloh was Ye's creative director. Abloh was art director for the 2011 Ye-Jay-Z album "Watch the Throne," for which Abloh was nominated for a Grammy.

Abloh's work with West served as a blueprint for future border-crossing collaborations that married high and low. With Nike, he partnered his Off-White label for a line of frenzy-inducing sneakers remixed with a variety of styles and Helvetica fonts. Abloh also designed furniture for IKEA, refillable bottles for Evian and Big Mac cartons for McDonald's. His work was exhibited at the Louvre, the Gagosian and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Abloh's death stunned the entertainment world. Actor Riz Ahmed said on Twitter that Abloh "stretched culture and changed the game." Fashion designer Jeff Staple wrote, "You taught us all how to dream." Pharrell Williams called Abloh "a kind, generous, thoughtful creative genius."

Abloh took what he called a "3% approach" to fashion — that a new design could be created by changing an original by 3%. Critics said Abloh was more brilliant at repackaging than creating something new. But Abloh's style was also self-aware — quotation marks were a trademark label for him — and high-minded.

"Streetwear in my mind is linked to Duchamp," Abloh told the New Yorker in 2019. "It's this idea of the readymade. I'm talking Lower East Side, New York. It's like hip-hop. It's sampling. I take James Brown, I chop it up, I make a new song."

Stars lined up to be dressed by Abloh. Beyoncé, Michael B. Jordan, Kim Kardashian West, Timothée

Chalamet and Serena Williams have worn his clothes.

Abloh's Off-White label, which LVMH acquired a majority stake in earlier this year, made him an arbiter of cool. But his appointment at Louis Vuitton brought Abloh to the apex of an industry he was once a scrappy outsider in — and made Abloh one of the most powerful Black executives in a historically closed fashion world.

As Abloh prepared for his debut menswear show in 2018, he told GQ, "I now have a platform to change the industry."

"We're designers, so we can start a trend, we can highlight issues, we can make a lot of people focus on something or we can cause a lot of people to focus on ourselves," Abloh said. "I'm not interested in (the latter). I'm interested in using my platform as one of a very small group of African-American males to design a house, to sort of show people in a poetic way."

Abloh is survived by his wife Shannon Abloh and his children, Lowe and Grey.

New country, new name for US citizen 'Enes Kanter Freedom'

BOSTON (AP) — Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter is changing his name to "Enes Kanter Freedom" to celebrate becoming a United States citizen.

Kanter's manager, Hank Fetic, told The Associated Press that Kanter will have his citizenship oath ceremony on Monday afternoon and at the same time will complete his legal name change.

The news was first reported by the Athletic.

Kanter, 29, is a native of Turkey who has been an outspoken critic of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Turkish government. Kanter has said his passport was revoked by his homeland in 2017.

The 2011 first-round draft pick has also taken to social media to support Tibetan independence and criticize Chinese treatment of the Uyghur people. During games, he has worn shoes decorated to say "Free Tibet" and argue for a boycott of the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/nba> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Fauci fires back at Cruz over COVID claims about Chinese lab

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, blasted Sen. Ted Cruz for suggesting that Fauci be investigated for statements he made about COVID-19 and said the criticism by the Texas Republican was an attack on science.

"I should be prosecuted? What happened on Jan. 6, senator?" Fauci, who is President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser, said in an interview that aired Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." It was a reference to the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump that was stoked as Cruz helped lead GOP objections to Congress' certifying the 2020 election results.

"I'm just going to do my job and I'm going to be saving lives, and they're going to be lying," Fauci said.

Some Republicans, including Cruz and Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., have accused Fauci of lying to Congress when he denied in May that the National Institutes of Health funded "gain of function" research — the practice of enhancing a virus in a lab to study its potential impact in the real world — at a virology lab in Wuhan, China. Cruz has urged Attorney General Merrick Garland to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate Fauci's statements.

Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, called the GOP criticism nonsense.

"Anybody who's looking at this carefully realizes that there's a distinct anti-science flavor to this," he said.

Cruz and Paul say an October letter from NIH to Congress contradicts Fauci. But no clear evidence or scientific consensus exists that "gain of function" research was funded by NIH, and there is no link of U.S.-funded research to the emergence of COVID-19. NIH has repeatedly maintained that its funding did not go to such research involving boosting the infectivity and lethality of a pathogen.

When asked in the CBS interview whether Republicans might be raising the claims to make him a scapegoat and deflect criticism of Trump, Fauci said, "of course, you have to be asleep not to figure that one out."

In omicron hot spot, somber mood as S Africa faces variant

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — The overcast, drizzly skies match the somber mood at the Tshwane University of Technology, a hot spot in South Africa's latest surge of COVID-19 cases, apparently driven by the new omicron variant that is leading countries around the world to impose new restrictions.

After several students tested positive, the university postponed some exams, and officials in the larger metropolitan area of Tshwane, which includes the capital of Pretoria, are pushing vaccinations, especially among younger adults who have been slow to get the shots.

At TUT, as the university is known, few students wanted to speak about the new variant that has cast a pall. Many were not vaccinated — only 22% of 18- to 34-year-olds in South Africa are — and some seemed to be rethinking that, though notably the university's vaccination center was closed for the weekend.

Manqoba Zitha, a student who has gotten the shot, said he will be pushing fellow classmates to do the same.

"I'm trying to encourage them so that they can vaccinate, so they can stay away from coronavirus because it's there, it's killing people, and now numbers are rising," said Zitha. "Now when we are watching TV we can see that people are getting coronavirus. So they must vaccinate!"

Nearly two years into the pandemic, the world is racing to contain the latest variant, first identified in southern Africa but popping up around the globe. Countries are imposing restrictions or bans on travelers from several countries — measures that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa called deeply disappointing Sunday — and re-imposing measures like mask mandates that some hoped were a thing of the past.

The World Health Organization named the new version of the virus "omicron" and classified it as a highly transmissible variant of concern, though its actual risks are not yet understood. Early evidence suggests it poses an increased risk that people who have already had COVID-19 could catch it again, the WHO said. It could take weeks to know if current vaccines are less effective against it.

Still, some experts are hopeful that vaccines will be at least somewhat effective at preventing serious illness and death — and continue to encourage people to get inoculated.

Gauteng province — home to Pretoria and South Africa's largest city of Johannesburg — is the center of the new surge. So far, cases there appear to be mild, according to doctors, and hospital admissions have not spiked.

But experts warn the early round of infections has been among the young and the situation may become more serious if the new surge affects older, unvaccinated South Africans. In all, 41% of those aged 18 and over are vaccinated — but young people have been particularly slow to step forward.

At least three South African universities — the University of Cape Town, Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Free State in Bloemfontein — have announced that vaccinations will be mandatory for students starting next year. Some experts think further measures will be needed.

"I do think that the decision that South Africa is going to have to make is probably around mandatory vaccination," said Mosa Moshabela, professor of public health at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban.

Demand for the vaccine has been so sluggish that the government recently requested slower deliveries to allow it time to use up its current stock of 19 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson shots.

In an address to the nation on Sunday, a solemn President Ramaphosa urged people to get vaccinated quickly.

"Tonight, I would like to call on every person who has not been vaccinated to go to their nearest vaccination station without delay," he said. "If there is someone in your family or among your friends who is not vaccinated, I call on you to encourage them to get vaccinated."

A new surge was long anticipated and even a new variant, but the speed with which omicron hit came

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as a “shock” to South Africa’s health experts.

While numbers of confirmed cases are still relatively low, they have been increasing at a high rate. The new spike started after some student parties in Pretoria. Numbers quickly jumped from a few hundred cases a day to thousands. South Africa announced 3,220 new cases Saturday, of which 82% are in Gauteng, according to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases. That’s still well below the peak of the last wave, when more than 25,000 were confirmed in a day.

As many as 90% of the new cases in Gauteng province are caused by omicron, Tulio de Oliveira, director of the KwaZulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform, said in a tweet, citing the results of diagnostic tests.

“We did expect that we may see a new or a different variant gaining momentum in the fourth wave ... but we did not really expect to see a variant with the kind of multiplicity of mutations. And that is capable of becoming highly transmissible and escape or evade immunity at the same time,” said Moshabela, the expert from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. “This was really the shock that we had.”

Although the current cases are concentrated in Pretoria and Johannesburg, tests show that omicron is already in all of South Africa’s nine provinces.

Back at TUT, Nhlanhla Africa Maphosa, a 25-year-old management student, is still trying to digest the news and what it will mean for his studies.

“It was just last week when they checked stats then they realize that so many students were affected by COVID-19 at the main campus,” Maphosa said. “We’re not that sure of the stats. ... But what we can say is that a high level or a high percentage of students has got COVID-19.”

Meldrum reported from Johannesburg. Follow AP’s coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

EXPLAINER: What we know and don’t know on new COVID variant

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — South African scientists identified a new version of the coronavirus that they say is behind a recent spike in COVID-19 infections in Gauteng, the country’s most populous province.

It’s unclear where the new variant first emerged, but scientists in South Africa alerted the World Health Organization in recent days, and it has now been seen in travelers arriving in several countries, from Australia to Israel to the Netherlands.

On Friday, the WHO designated it as a “variant of concern,” naming it “omicron” after a letter in the Greek alphabet.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT OMICRON?

Health Minister Joe Phaahla said the variant was linked to an “exponential rise” of cases in the last few days.

From just over 200 new confirmed cases per day in recent weeks, South Africa saw the number of new daily cases rocket to more than 3,200 Saturday, most in Gauteng.

Struggling to explain the sudden rise in cases, scientists studied virus samples and discovered the new variant. Now, as many as 90% of the new cases in Gauteng are caused by it, according to Tulio de Oliveira, director of the KwaZulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform.

WHY ARE SCIENTISTS WORRIED ABOUT THIS NEW VARIANT?

After convening a group of experts to assess the data, the WHO said that “preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant,” as compared to other variants.

That means people who contracted COVID-19 and recovered could be subject to catching it again.

The variant appears to have a high number of mutations — about 30 — in the coronavirus’ spike protein, which could affect how easily it spreads to people.

Sharon Peacock, who has led genetic sequencing of COVID-19 in Britain at the University of Cambridge, said the data so far suggest the new variant has mutations “consistent with enhanced transmissibility,”

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but said that “the significance of many of the mutations is still not known.”

Lawrence Young, a virologist at the University of Warwick, described omicron as “the most heavily mutated version of the virus we have seen,” including potentially worrying changes never before seen all in the same virus.

WHAT’S KNOWN AND NOT KNOWN ABOUT THE VARIANT?

Scientists know that omicron is genetically distinct from previous variants including the beta and delta variants, but do not know if these genetic changes make it any more transmissible or dangerous. So far, there is no indication the variant causes more severe disease.

It will likely take weeks to sort out if omicron is more infectious and if vaccines are still effective against it.

Peter Openshaw, a professor of experimental medicine at Imperial College London said it was “extremely unlikely” that current vaccines wouldn’t work, noting they are effective against numerous other variants.

Even though some of the genetic changes in omicron appear worrying, it’s still unclear if they will pose a public health threat. Some previous variants, like the beta variant, initially alarmed scientists but didn’t end up spreading very far.

“We don’t know if this new variant could get a toehold in regions where delta is,” said Peacock of the University of Cambridge. “The jury is out on how well this variant will do where there are other variants circulating.”

To date, delta is by far the most predominant form of COVID-19, accounting for more than 99% of sequences submitted to the world’s biggest public database.

HOW DID THIS NEW VARIANT ARISE?

The coronavirus mutates as it spreads and many new variants, including those with worrying genetic changes, often just die out. Scientists monitor COVID-19 sequences for mutations that could make the disease more transmissible or deadly, but they cannot determine that simply by looking at the virus.

Peacock said the variant “may have evolved in someone who was infected but could then not clear the virus, giving the virus the chance to genetically evolve,” in a scenario similar to how experts think the alpha variant — which was first identified in England — also emerged, by mutating in an immune-compromised person.

ARE THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BEING IMPOSED BY SOME COUNTRIES JUSTIFIED?

Maybe.

Israel is banning foreigners from entering the country and Morocco has stopped all incoming international air travel.

A number of other countries are restricting flights in from southern Africa.

Given the recent rapid rise in COVID-19 in South Africa, restricting travel from the region is “prudent” and would buy authorities more time, said Neil Ferguson, an infectious diseases expert at Imperial College London.

But the WHO noted that such restrictions are often limited in their effect and urged countries to keep borders open.

Jeffrey Barrett, director of COVID-19 Genetics at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, thought that the early detection of the new variant could mean restrictions taken now would have a bigger impact than when the delta variant first emerged.

“With delta, it took many, many weeks into India’s terrible wave before it became clear what was going on and delta had already seeded itself in many places in the world and it was too late to do anything about it,” he said. “We may be at an earlier point with this new variant so there may still be time to do something about it.”

South Africa’s government said the country was being treated unfairly because it has advanced genomic sequencing and could detect the variant quicker and asked other countries to reconsider the travel bans.

Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO’s regional director for Africa, commended South Africa and Botswana for quickly informing the world about the new variant.

"With the omicron variant now detected in several regions of the world, putting in place travel bans that target Africa attacks global solidarity," Moeti said. "COVID-19 constantly exploits our divisions. We will only get the better of the virus if we work together for solutions."

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In Iraq, family mourns daughter who drowned crossing to UK

By SALAR SALIM and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Snow globes, teddy bears and makeup brushes — these were the trinkets left behind in northern Iraq by Maryam Nouri who perished this week along with at least 26 others in an ill-fated voyage with dreams of reaching the United Kingdom.

A wake for Nouri, called Baran by her friends and family, was held in Soran on Sunday in the Kurdish semi-autonomous northern region. Male relatives sat outside the family home, counting prayer beads in her remembrance, in line with local customs. Her body has not yet reached Iraq, pending legal issues, they said.

Nouri, 24, had boarded an inflatable boat carrying migrants with hopes of being reunited with her fiancé, Karzan in Britain. She had managed to get a Schengen visa to Europe, and traveled to Italy on Nov. 1, and later Germany and France.

She did not tell her fiancé she was planning on making the voyage across the English Channel illicitly on Wednesday until it was too late. The flimsy boat sunk a few miles (kilometers) from the French coast, drowning at least 27 migrants bound for Britain. France's interior minister called it biggest migration tragedy on the crossing to date. The nationalities of the dead were not immediately known, but many are believed to be Iraqi.

Ever-increasing numbers of people fleeing conflict or poverty in Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, Eritrea or elsewhere are risking the perilous journey in small, unseaworthy craft from France, hoping to win asylum or find better opportunities in Britain. The crossings have tripled this year compared to 2020.

Aid groups blamed European governments for increasingly hard-line migration policies they say are driving the recent surge in smuggling.

Nouri had tried many times to get a visa to the U.K. but was unsuccessful.

Iman Hassan, Nouri's cousin, said she had a premonition something was terribly wrong before receiving news of her death. Her sister had rushed in with news of a boat that had sunk in the channel and there was no news of Nouri.

"I sensed in my heart, because I couldn't sleep for two nights before it happened," she said, seated outside the family home Wednesday.

A disproportionate number of the migrants have been from Iraq's relatively stable Kurdish region, who chose to sell their homes, cars and other belongings to pay off smugglers with the hope of reaching the European Union. Rising unemployment, endemic corruption and a recent economic crisis that slashed state salaries have undermined faith in a decent future for their autonomous region and kindled the desire in many to leave.

Nouri had called Hassan, also her best friend, on Oct. 1 to tell her she was traveling to Europe. The two met later, their very last.

Hassan had asked her if she intended to make the journey with the help of smugglers, warning her this would be dangerous.

"You see what happens to people smuggled by boat, people fall, break their legs and others die," she recalled telling her.

But Nouri dismissed her fears. She was going via airplane, she reassured her.

It was her first time flying in a plane.

In Nouri's untouched bedroom, large red teddy bears cover her neatly made bed. Make-up brushes and

snow globes — one of a newly married pair — and photos of her betrothed cover the vanity.

She was one of eight daughters. Hassan said she was the kindest.

"She took care of my grandmother when she was sick in bed. She was a very kind girl," she said.

Nouri was smart and determined, Hassan said. "In any job she took, she was successful," she said.

She decided to take up a career in cosmetics when finishing high school with hopes of becoming a makeup artist. She had completed courses on the subject.

As the men gathered to recite verses from the Holy Quran, Nouri Dargalayi, Nouri's father, greeted guests.

His daughter had her engagement ceremony here, he said, pointing to the area where relatives had gathered to pay respects.

"They (the couple) were trying to build a decent life for themselves, but it ended," he said. "She sank in the sea and passed away before arriving."

Kullab contributed reporting from Baghdad.

Israeli president celebrates Hanukkah at West Bank site

By MOSHE EDRI Associated Press

HEBRON, West Bank (AP) — Israel's president on Sunday visited one of the most contentious spots in the occupied West Bank to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, sparking scuffles between Israeli security forces and protesters.

President Isaac Herzog said he was visiting the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron to celebrate the ancient city's Jewish past and promote interfaith relations. But his visit to the city, known for its tiny ultranationalist Jewish settler community and difficult living conditions for Palestinians, drew widespread criticism from Palestinians and left-wing Israelis.

About 1,000 Jewish settlers live in small enclaves guarded by Israeli soldiers in the city, surrounded by some 200,000 Palestinians who must cross through Israeli checkpoints to move from place to place.

There is frequent violence between the sides and the Cave of the Patriarchs, revered by Muslims and Jews, was the site of a massacre by a Jewish settler who killed 29 Muslim worshippers in 1994.

Herzog made no mention of the 1994 massacre but paid homage to the more than 60 Jews killed by Palestinians in Hebron during riots in 1929, noting that a relative had survived the fighting.

"I have no doubt that she would have been very moved by the fact that one of her descendants is lighting Hanukkah candles in the Cave of the Patriarchs as the president of the state of Israel," he said during a ceremony marking the first night of the eight-day holiday.

Recognition of the Jewish attachment to the city "must be beyond all controversy," he added.

The cave is believed to be the burial site of the Jewish and Muslim patriarch Abraham. It also is revered as the burial site of other Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs and is considered the second holiest site in Judaism.

In his speech, he made a brief call for "peace between all religions" and "to denounce all forms of hatred and violence."

But critics accused Herzog of embracing the most radical elements of Israeli society. Herzog is a former leader of Israel's Labor party, which supports a two-state solution with the Palestinians. And his current position is meant to be apolitical and to serve as a moral compass for the nation.

Hussein Al Sheikh, a top Palestinian official, called the visit a "political, moral and religious provocation."

Several dozen Israeli protesters gathered about a kilometer (half a mile) away from the cave, screaming "shame" as Israeli police held some of them back. Journalists and protesters were not allowed near the holy site.

"Herzog doesn't have any shame," said Nurit Budinsky, an Israeli activist. "He came to celebrate with these Jews who took over the city and celebrate with them a holiday of freedom. Here in Hebron there is no freedom, there are people who live in unbearable occupation."

Breaking the Silence, a group of former Israeli combat soldiers who oppose Israel's West Bank occupation,

accused Herzog of "giving an official seal of approval to this obscene reality and the people perpetuating it."

The Jewish residents of Hebron are among the most hard line of the roughly 700,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians claim all three areas for a future independent state. The international community overwhelmingly considers the settlements illegal. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

Aviya Glass, a resident of the neighboring settlement of Kiryat Arba, said the high-profile visit "shows us how good it is for people with such a status to come here to strengthen the settlement."

Cambodian prince and politician Norodom Ranariddh dies at 77

By SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia's Prince Norodom Ranariddh, former prime minister and the son of the late King Norodom Sihanouk, died Sunday in France, Information Minister Khieu Kanharith announced on his Facebook page. He was 77.

Khieu Kanharith, who said he learned of the death from Um Daravuth, a minor member of Cambodia's royal family, did not give the cause of death.

Ranariddh had been in ill-health since an auto accident in Cambodia in 2018. An aide to Ranariddh, who spoke on condition of anonymity because who was not authorized to speak to the media, said he went to Paris in late 2019 for medical treatment of a broken pelvis.

Ranariddh's career was always in the shade of his charismatic father, Sihanouk, and his wily and ruthless political rival, Hun Sen, with whom he shared power before being pushed aside. Hun Sen remains prime minister.

Ranariddh traded on his position as the son of Sihanouk, but lacked his father's strong personality and political adroitness. Ranariddh's half brother, Norodom Sihamoni, became king in 2004 after the abdication of Sihanouk, who died in 2012. Sihamoni's Facebook page confirmed Ranariddh's death.

Ranariddh, a French-educated law scholar, entered public life in 1983, when he took over leadership of Funcinpec, an armed resistance movement against the Vietnamese-installed government led by Hun Sen that succeeded the brutal 1975-79 communist Khmer Rouge regime.

Ranariddh converted Funcinpec into a royalist party that won U.N.-sponsored elections in 1993. The elections were part of a peace process following the fall of the Khmer Rouge and three decades of civil war.

Hun Sen's post-election threats to unleash the security forces he still controlled resulted in him becoming second prime minister under Ranariddh, who was named first prime minister.

Hun Sen staged a successful coup in 1997 after two days of combat in the capital, Phnom Penh. Ranariddh lost his post after fleeing into temporary exile, and Funcinpec fell strongly under Hun Sen's influence. Ranariddh attempted several comebacks, and in 2006 founded the Norodom Ranariddh Party, but was destined to remain a marginal political player.

Ranariddh's last position was as chief advisor to his half brother, King Sihamoni. He was also leader of what was left of the Funcinpec party, which announced late Sunday that his body would soon be sent back to Cambodia.

Ranariddh's second wife, Ouk Phalla, a classical dancer more than three decades younger than him with whom he had two children, died in the 2018 car accident.

Swiss vote to approve COVID restrictions as infections rise

BERLIN (AP) — Swiss voters on Sunday gave clear backing to legislation that introduced a system with special COVID-19 certificates under which only people who have been vaccinated, recovered or tested negative can attend public events and gatherings.

Final results showed 62% of voters supporting the legislation, which is already in force. The referendum offered a rare bellwether of public opinion on the issue of government policy to fight the spread of coronavirus in Europe, which is currently the global epicenter of the pandemic.

The vote on the country's "COVID-19 law," which also has unlocked billions of Swiss francs (dollars) in aid for workers and businesses hit by the pandemic, came as Switzerland — like many other nations in Europe — faces a steep rise in coronavirus cases.

The Swiss federal government, unlike others, hasn't responded with new restrictions. Analysts said it didn't want to stir up more opposition to its anti-COVID-19 policies before they faced Sunday's test at the ballot box — but that if Swiss voters gave a thumbs-up, the government may well ratchet up its anti-COVID efforts.

Health Minister Alain Berset said, with the result, authorities "still have the necessary instruments to manage the crisis, and we can, if necessary, adjust the instruments to developments."

Of the country's 26 cantons (states), only two — Schwyz and Appenzell Innerrhoden, both conservative rural regions in eastern Switzerland — voted against the legislation.

"A decision has been made and we must come together now to get through this winter as well as possible," Berset said. "This is an appeal for unity but also for respect for decisions that have been taken."

Turnout on Sunday was 65.7%, unusually high for a country that holds referendums several times a year.

On Tuesday, Swiss health authorities warned of a rising "fifth wave" on infections in the rich Alpine country, where vaccination rates are roughly in line with those in hard-hit neighbors Austria and Germany at about two-thirds of the population. Infection rates have soared in recent weeks.

The seven-day average case count in Switzerland shot up to more than 5,200 per day from mid-October to mid-November, a more than five-fold increase. Austria, meanwhile, has imposed a national lockdown to fight the rising infections.

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

Community systems offer alternative paths for solar growth

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Strolling his church's rooftop among 630 solar panels, Bishop Richard Howell Jr. acknowledged climate change isn't the most pressing concern for his predominantly Black congregation — even though it disproportionately harms people of color and the poor.

"The violence we're having, shootings, killings, COVID-19," Howell said wearily. "You're trying to save families, and right now no one's really talking about global warming."

Yet his Shiloh Temple International Ministries in north Minneapolis welcomed the opportunity to become one of many "community solar" providers popping up around the U.S. amid surging demand for renewable energy.

Larger than home rooftop systems but smaller than utility-scale complexes, they're located atop buildings, or on abandoned factory grounds and farms. Individuals or companies subscribe to portions of energy sent to the grid and get credits that reduce their electricity bills.

The model attracts people who can't afford rooftop installations or live where solar is not accessible, such as renters and owners of dwellings without direct sunlight.

"We're helping fight this climate war and blessing families with lower costs," Howell said.

Nearly 1,600 community solar projects, or "gardens," are operating nationwide, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado. Most are in Minnesota, Massachusetts, New York and Colorado, although 41 states and Washington, D.C., have at least one. Florida has relatively few but they're big enough to make the state a leading producer.

Together they generate roughly 3.4 gigawatts — enough for about 650,000 homes — or roughly 3% of the nation's solar output. But more than 4.3 gigawatts are expected to go online within five years, says the Solar Energy Industries Association.

"We can have a cheaper, cleaner and more equitable system for everyone if we build smaller, local resources," said Jeff Cramer, executive director of the Coalition for Community Solar Access, a trade group.

Yet it's unclear how big a role community solar will play in the U.S. transition from fossil fuels to renew-

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ables.

The Biden administration is continuing a \$15 million Energy Department initiative begun in 2019 to support its growth, particularly in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. The department announced a goal in October of powering the equivalent of 5 million households with community solar by 2025, saving consumers \$1 billion.

But power regulation happens at the state level, where interest groups are fighting over what defines community solar and who should generate it.

The Solar Energy Industries Association says the label should apply only where private developers and nonprofit cooperatives, not just utilities, can operate solar gardens and send power to the grid. The association says 19 states and Washington, D.C., have such policies.

Utilities say having too many players could unravel regulatory structures that assure reliable electric service. They warn of disasters such as last winter's deadly blackout in Texas.

"You've got lots of individual profit-motivated actors trying to make a buck," said Brandon Hofmeister, a senior vice president with Consumers Energy. The Michigan power company is fighting state bills that would allow non-utility community solar providers.

Others say utilities are simply ducking competition.

"What's really driving the rise of community solar is the free market," said John Freeman, executive director of the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association, a trade group. "It saves money and promotes a cleaner environment."

GROWING PAINS

Community solar took off in Minnesota after lawmakers in 2013 required Xcel Energy, the state's largest utility, to establish a program open to other developers. It has more than 400 gardens — tops in the U.S. — with nearly 500 applications pending.

Keith Dent and Noy Koumalasy, who are married, say subscribing to the Shiloh Temple garden has lowered their bills an average of \$98 per year.

"You're generating your own power and saving a little money," said Dent, who helped install several complexes built by Cooperative Energy Futures, a local nonprofit.

Xcel, which is required to buy the gardens' electricity, says the state formula for valuing solar energy makes it too expensive. The costs, spread among all the utility's customers, essentially force non-subscribers to subsidize community solar, spokesman Matthew Lindstrom said.

Community solar backers say Xcel's claim ignores savings from local gardens' lower distribution costs.

Among Cooperative Energy Futures gardens are 3,760 panels on a parking deck overlooking the Twins' baseball stadium and a collection on a farm near Faribault, 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of Minneapolis.

Although conflicted about taking six acres out of production, farmer Gerald Bauer supports the climate cause and says lease payments of \$1,200 per acre make community solar a financial winner.

"Farming doesn't even come close to the revenue that the solar generates," he said, walking through rows of panels framed by fields of corn.

A cooperative project for a municipal roof in nearby Eden Prairie has twice as many would-be subscribers as panels.

"There are people in the community who want to support clean energy any way they can," said Jennifer Hassebroek, sustainability coordinator for the suburban city.

But community solar developers are hitting a roadblock: Under state law, residents and businesses can subscribe to facilities only in their county or an adjacent one.

That means the heavily populated Twin Cities have many potential subscribers but are short of space for gardens. Rural areas have plenty of room but fewer buyers for the energy.

"Instead of spreading across the state, we're going to concentrate on those counties that are adjacent to the subscription demand," said Reed Richerson, chief operating officer of Minneapolis-based U.S. Solar Corp., which builds solar projects in half a dozen states.

A bill by State Rep. Patty Acomb, a Democrat representing a Twin Cities suburban district, would drop

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the “contiguous county” rule.

But Xcel says that contradicts a basic community solar principle: producing energy close to where it’s used. Community solar is billed as making renewable energy more available to households, especially needy ones. Yet businesses and public entities with sustainability goals, such as schools and city halls, subscribe to most of the power.

Some states are trying to change that.

New Mexico requires at least 30% of each community solar project’s subscribers to be low-income. Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey and Oregon reserve portions of energy for low- and moderate-income residents. New York provides financial incentives for developers to recruit them.

“There’s still a lot to be done to open community solar market access to marginalized folks,” said Gilbert Michaud, an assistant professor of public policy at Loyola University Chicago.

LOOKING AHEAD

Community solar is struggling in states without established systems.

Michigan has about a dozen projects, although Consumers Energy this summer opened a 1,752-panel garden on abandoned factory grounds in Cadillac.

Conservative Republican Michele Hoytenga and progressive Democrat Rachel Hood are sponsoring House legislation to establish a state-regulated program open to third-party energy providers and utilities.

Hoytenga says it would boost freedom and the economy without raising taxes. Hood emphasizes climate benefits and equal access to renewable energy.

But their bills are opposed by Consumers Energy and DTE Energy, the state’s two biggest utilities. They would cause “overproduction of energy ... and ultimately higher rates,” said DTE Energy spokesman Pete Ternes.

Prospects are brighter in states friendly to non-utility developers such as New Jersey, Maine and Illinois, said Rachel Goldstein of the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

She forecasts a 140% nationwide jump in production capacity by 2026, although growth could hinge on lifting barriers such as project size limits.

Community solar likely won’t rival home rooftop installations soon if ever, Goldstein said, much less approach utility-scale operations.

“It’s not realistic to say we’re going to solve the climate crisis with this and everyone’s going to be a millionaire,” said Timothy DenHerder-Thomas, general manager of Cooperative Energy Futures. “But we can say you’re going to have a better life, more affordable and cleaner.”

Follow John Flesher at <https://twitter.com/johnflesher>

Follow AP’s climate coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>.

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Who is the real Ghislaine Maxwell: Epstein enabler or pawn?

By DANICA KIRKA and TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ghislaine Maxwell spent the first half of her life with her father, a rags-to-riches billionaire who looted his companies’ pension funds before dying a mysterious death. She spent the second with another tycoon, Jeffrey Epstein, who killed himself while charged with sexually abusing teenage girls.

Now, after a life of both scandal and luxury, Maxwell’s next act will be decided by a U.S. trial.

Starting Monday, prosecutors in New York will argue that even as she was sipping cocktails with the likes of Prince Andrew, Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, Maxwell, 59, was secretly abetting Epstein’s crimes with girls as young as 14.

A key question for jurors: Was Maxwell an unwitting pawn of Epstein’s manipulations or an opportunist

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who knew all about his sex crimes?

Ian Maxwell says his sister is being railroaded by a U.S. criminal justice system intent on holding someone responsible for Epstein's crimes.

"And she is paying a heavy price, a blood price for that," he told The Associated Press.

Ghislaine Maxwell grew up at Headington Hill Hall, a 51-room English country mansion where politicians, business leaders and newspaper editors attended lavish parties punctuated by trumpeters and fireworks. BBC images from the time show Ghislaine as a child with a kid-size plate of food, circling in a party dress, learning how to be a master networker.

Her father, born Jan Ludvik Hoch, was one of nine children of Yiddish-speaking parents in a village in what is now southwestern Ukraine. Escaping the Holocaust, he ultimately joined the British Army, rising to the rank of captain and transforming himself into Robert Maxwell.

After the war, Maxwell built on his military connections to buy the rights to German scientific journals, the beginnings of a publishing empire that ultimately included the Daily Mirror, one of Britain's biggest tabloid newspapers, as well as the New York Daily News and the book publisher Macmillan.

Along the way he married, fathered nine children and was twice elected to Parliament. He also earned a reputation for boorish behavior and bullying subordinates.

Ghislaine was Maxwell's youngest child, born on Christmas Day 1961. Her brother Michael was severely brain damaged in a car accident just days later at age 15, although he lived for another seven years.

Her mother, Elisabeth Maxwell, wrote in her memoir that she and Robert were so focused on their injured son that their baby daughter was overlooked. So neglected was Ghislaine that at the age of 3 she stood in front of her mother and said, "Mummy, I exist!"

"I was devastated," Elisabeth Maxwell wrote in "A Mind of My Own: My Life with Robert Maxwell." "And from that day on, we all made a great effort with her, fussing over her so much that she became spoiled, the only one of my children I can truly say that about."

While studying history at the University of Oxford in the early 1980s, Ghislaine Maxwell began building contacts of her own, including Prince Andrew, who would later invite her and Epstein to Windsor Castle and Sandringham, Queen Elizabeth II's country estate.

After graduating, she worked for her father in a variety of roles. In 1991, at age 29, she became his U.S. emissary after he bought the Daily News amid efforts to compete with fellow media tycoon — and New York Post owner — Rupert Murdoch.

Later that year, Robert Maxwell fell off his yacht — the Lady Ghislaine — in the Canary Islands and died in what some saw as an accident and others a suicide. Investors would discover his wealth was an illusion: He had diverted hundreds of millions of pounds from his companies' pension funds to prop up his empire.

Soon after her father's death, Ghislaine Maxwell was photographed sitting next to Epstein during a memorial at the Plaza Hotel.

John Sweeney, a longtime U.K. journalist and creator of the podcast "Hunting Ghislaine," told the AP he believes that "after the monster her father died, she found a second monster."

"Robert Maxwell stole hundreds of millions of pounds from people who were dependent upon his good word; Jeffrey Epstein turned out to be a darker figure, a worse human being," Sweeney said.

Ian Maxwell said his sister's relationship with Epstein developed after the family advised her to remain in the U.S. because the Maxwell name was "in the dirt" at home. Amid the family's reputational and financial woes, she had to make her own way in New York and forge new friendships, he said.

One of those was with Epstein, a onetime teacher who built his own fortune on the back of contacts like the former CEO of the parent company of lingerie retailer Victoria's Secret.

"My father was a powerful man — you know, an alpha male, really. And when you have that kind of experience, all of us, all of the brothers and sisters have had to somehow deal with that," Ian Maxwell said. "Ghislaine was no exception. But clearly to then say, 'Well, you know, he dies, then she moves along to the next rich man.' I just don't buy that."

In sworn testimony for an earlier civil case, Ghislaine Maxwell acknowledged that she had a romantic

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relationship with Epstein but said she later became his employee, tasked with things like hiring staff for his six homes.

"I hired assistants, architects, decorators, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, pool people, pilots. I hired all sorts of people," Maxwell said during a deposition in April 2016. "A very small part of my job was to find adult professional massage therapists for Jeffrey. As far as I'm concerned, everyone who came to his house was an adult professional person."

But in 2005, Epstein was arrested in Palm Beach, Florida, and accused of hiring multiple underage girls — many students at a local high school — to perform sex acts. He pleaded guilty to a charge of procuring a person under 18 for prostitution and served 13 months in jail.

Years of civil litigation followed, in which women accused Epstein and Maxwell of sexual abuse. Prosecutors in New York revived the case and charged Epstein with sex trafficking in 2019, but he killed himself in jail before he could face trial.

The indictment against Maxwell is based on accusations from four women who say she recruited them to give Epstein massages that progressed into sexual abuse. One was just 14 at the time. Maxwell sometimes participated in the sexual encounters and was involved in paying at least one accuser, prosecutors allege.

Annie Farmer alleges she was 16 when she was tricked into visiting Epstein's New Mexico ranch under the guise of attending an event for college-bound students. But when she arrived, there were no other students. She said Maxwell tried to groom her by taking her to the movies and shopping, and giving her an unsolicited massage while the teenager was topless.

The AP does not identify people who say they were victims of sexual abuse unless they come forward publicly. Although she is not identified by name in court documents, Farmer has described her experiences in interviews with ABC and The New York Times. When Maxwell — a citizen of the U.S., U.K. and France — sought bail, Farmer asked the judge to deny it, calling her a "psychopath."

"I do not believe that ... any of the women she exploited will see justice if she is released on bail," Farmer wrote in a letter to the court. "She has lived a life of privilege, abusing her position of power to live beyond the rules. Fleeing the country in order to escape once more would fit with her long history of anti-social behavior."

Virginia Giuffre, who has filed a related civil lawsuit against Britain's Prince Andrew but isn't part of the criminal case, has described Maxwell as a "Mary Poppins" figure who made young girls feel comfortable as they were being lured into Epstein's web.

Giuffre alleges she was 17 when she was flown to London to have sex with Andrew at Maxwell's house. Other encounters with Andrew occurred at Epstein's homes in Manhattan and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to her lawsuit. Andrew denies the allegations.

Prosecutors say Maxwell went into hiding after Epstein's suicide, moving into a gated New Hampshire home she bought for \$1 million — with a husband her lawyers have declined to publicly identify — and wrapping her cellphone in foil to ward off hacking.

Maxwell was just protecting herself from the press, her lawyers said in court papers — a notion U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan rejected.

Nathan repeatedly denied Maxwell bail, deeming the risk of her fleeing too great. The judge's decision has left Maxwell isolated at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, confined to a small cell equipped with a toilet and a concrete bed. Ian Maxwell said imprisonment is preventing his sister from receiving a fair trial.

Ghislaine Maxwell has remained mostly silent about the Epstein allegations over nearly two decades, but in a 2016 deposition in a civil case, she said she learned about the allegations against him "like everybody else, like the rest of the world, when it was announced in the papers."

She said she never saw Epstein getting massages from anyone under 18 and that no one ever complained to her that Epstein demanded sex.

"Never," she declared.

With Epstein gone and no apparent recordings of alleged incidents that occurred two decades ago, the

trial will likely hinge on the women's allegations and Maxwell's denial.

A jury will soon decide who it believes.

Kirka reported from London.

For cop who shot Daunte Wright, will 'wrong gun' plea work?

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — When a suburban Minneapolis police officer shot and killed Daunte Wright in April, her reaction on body-camera video seemed to instantly establish the key facts of the case: "I grabbed the wrong (expletive) gun," Kim Potter said. "I'm going to go to prison."

But legal experts say a conviction for Potter, who says she meant to pull her Taser, isn't as certain as it might seem — at least on the most serious charge she faces, first-degree manslaughter. Jury selection begins Tuesday.

The shooting of Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, by the white officer sparked intense protests in Brooklyn Center just as nearby Minneapolis was already on edge as that city's fired officer Derek Chauvin was on trial in George Floyd's death.

The concrete barriers, chain-link fencing and National Guard soldiers that surrounded the courthouse for that trial are gone, but enhanced security will be in place for Potter's trial — with fewer entry points and the closure of a parking garage.

Potter, who resigned two days after the shooting, says she made an innocent mistake when she reached for her pistol instead of her Taser. But prosecutors, including the leader of the team that got Chauvin convicted for murder, say Wright's death was manslaughter and that Potter, an experienced officer who was trained to know better, should go to prison.

The big questions for the jury will be whether Potter's actions rose to recklessness or culpable negligence, as the law requires. Defense attorneys also argue that Wright was responsible for his own death because he tried to drive off from a traffic stop and could have dragged an officer to his death if Potter hadn't intervened.

"What we have basically is an innocent mistake," defense attorney Earl Gray said in a preview of his arguments. "That she wasn't culpably negligent and that she didn't cause the death of Mr. Wright. He caused his death himself."

According to the complaint, the officer Potter was training, Anthony Luckey, told Wright they stopped him the afternoon of April 11 for the air freshener hanging from his rear-view mirror and the car's expired license plate tabs. Luckey then found an arrest warrant for a weapons violation. They went back to arrest him, joined by Sgt. Mychal Johnson.

Wright obeyed Luckey's order to get out. But as Luckey was handcuffing him, Wright pulled away and got back in. As Luckey held onto Wright, Potter said "I'll tase ya." The video then shows Potter, holding her handgun in her right hand and pointing it at Wright. Again, Potter said, "I'll tase you," and then two seconds later: "Taser, Taser, Taser." One second later, she fired a single bullet into Wright's chest.

"(Expletive)! I just shot him. ... I grabbed the wrong (expletive) gun," Potter said. A minute later, she said: "I'm going to go to prison."

Prosecutors allege that Potter committed first-degree manslaughter by causing Wright's death while committing a misdemeanor crime, namely recklessly handling a gun, when death was reasonably foreseeable. The second-degree manslaughter count alleges that she acted with culpable negligence. Neither charge requires the intent to kill.

Prosecutors suggested in pretrial filings that Potter should not have even used her Taser. Police probably could have found Wright later so the officers should have let him drive away, they suggested.

Experts agree that drawing a firearm instead of a stun gun is rare. To avoid confusion, officers typically carry their stun guns on their weak sides, by their nondominant hand, and away from handguns carried on their strong side. That's how Brooklyn Center officers are trained and how Potter had her duty belt

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arranged. And there are several obvious differences between the two weapons. For one thing, a Taser is yellow. A Glock is all black.

Joe Friedberg, a local defense attorney who isn't connected to the case, said Wright's attempt to drive off when Officer Johnson was partly inside the car would have been sufficient grounds for Potter to shoot and kill him intentionally — and that is enough to acquit, he said.

Mike Brandt, another local defense attorney not connected with the case, saw it differently. He said it's clear Potter mishandled a firearm — an element of the first-degree manslaughter charge — though the jury might struggle with whether she did so recklessly. The "culpable negligence," or taking an unreasonable risk, is easier to prove, making second-degree manslaughter more likely, Brandt said.

In one of the best-known cases of grabbing a gun instead of a Taser, a transit officer in Oakland, California, killed 22-year-old Oscar Grant in 2009. Johannes Mehserle was sentenced to two years in prison for involuntary manslaughter.

Oakland civil rights attorney John Burris, who won a \$2.8 million settlement for Grant's family, said Taser mix-ups have dwindled since police across the country stepped up stun-gun training after Grant's death.

Burris said he thinks Potter had the right to use reasonable force and could get credit from the jury for intending to use her Taser. And if that happens, he said, the best the prosecution might get is a conviction on the lesser charge. But if the jury agrees she should not have used her Taser at all, he added, they might find it was first-degree manslaughter.

Still, if Potter comes across as remorseful, she'll get empathy that could result in an acquittal or hung jury, Burris said.

"These are tough cases," he said. "A lot of emotion comes in a case like that. If an officer did not intend to kill someone, that officer is going to be highly emotional. That emotion is going to have an impact on jurors."

Attorneys are expected to screen jurors closely for their attitudes on the sometimes destructive protests that occurred in Minneapolis after Floyd's death. Questionnaires sent to potential jurors asked about their views of those protests and others over the past two years, as well as whether they participated, had been injured or suffered property damage, or knew anyone who had.

Similar questionnaires were used in the Chauvin trial, where jury selection took 11 days, and his attorney repeatedly asked potential jurors whether they could set aside strong public opinion and deliver a fair verdict.

The trial timeline for Potter sets aside at least six days for jury selection, with opening statements no sooner than Dec. 8.

Zaynab Mohamed, community advocacy manager for the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, was among the activists who repeatedly demonstrated outside the home of the county prosecutor who originally had Potter's case to demand murder charges be filed. That didn't work, but the prosecutor eventually handed the case over to Attorney General Keith Ellison's office.

Mohamed said people are "more energized than they ever were." She said an acquittal for Potter would mean another outpouring.

"I think there will be a level of anger, and people will take to the streets like they did after the murder of George Floyd," she said.

Associated Press//Report for America Statehouse News Initiative reporter Mohamed Ibrahim contributed to this story.

Find the AP's full coverage of the Daunte Wright case at: <https://apnews.com/hub/death-of-daunte-wright>

Taiwan sends jets after 27 Chinese planes enter buffer zone

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan said 27 Chinese aircraft entered its air defense buffer zone on Sunday, the latest in a long series of incursions as part of Beijing's pressure on the self-ruled island.

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The Defense Ministry said Taiwan scrambled combat aircraft to “warn” the Chinese planes to leave. It also deployed missile systems to monitor them.

Sunday’s incursion included 18 fighter jets and five H-6 bombers, as well as a Y-20 aerial refueling aircraft, according to Taiwan’s Defense Ministry.

The Chinese aircraft flew into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone near the southern part of the island and out into the Pacific Ocean before returning to China, according to a map by Taiwan authorities.

Over the past year, the frequency of Chinese incursions has increased, with about 150 aircraft over a period of four days.

China’s air force mission toward Taiwan came as Chinese President Xi Jinping met with officers at a military conference, where he called for military talent cultivation to support and strengthen the armed forces, according to state-owned news agency Xinhua.

Xi said that talent is imperative in achieving victory in military competition and gaining the upper hand in future wars, according to Xinhua.

China claims democratically ruled Taiwan as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary. It refuses to recognize the island’s government and has increasingly sought to isolate the independence-leaning administration of President Tsai Ing-wen.

Taiwan and China split during a civil war in 1949, and Beijing opposes Taiwan’s involvement in international organizations.

Trial set to start on charges Smollett faked racist attack

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A popular actor steps out onto the street and is brutally reminded that, despite his fame and wealth, places still exist where the color of his skin and sexual orientation put him in danger.

That was the story that ricocheted around the world after Jussie Smollett, a Black and openly gay actor, reported to Chicago police that he was the victim of a hate crime.

Nearly three years later, Smollett is about to stand trial on charges that he staged the whole thing.

He was charged with felony disorderly conduct after law enforcement and prosecutors said he lied to police about what happened in the early morning hours of Jan. 29, 2019, in downtown Chicago. He has pleaded not guilty. Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday. Disorderly conduct, a class 4 felony, carries a sentence of up to three years in prison but experts have said it is more likely that if Smollett is convicted he would be placed on probation and perhaps ordered to perform community service.

Smollett told police he was walking home from a Subway sandwich shop at 2 a.m. when two men he said recognized him from the TV show “Empire” began hurling racial and homophobic slurs at him. He said the men struck him, looped a makeshift noose around his neck and shouted, “This is MAGA country,” a reference to then-President Donald Trump’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again.”

Reaction to his reported assault underscored the increasingly polarized political landscape; Democratic politicians and others called it a shocking example of Trump-era bigotry and hate, while Republicans accused liberals of rushing to paint the president’s supporters as racists.

Just weeks later came the stunning announcement that Smollett was charged with staging the attack to further his career and secure a higher salary. And, police said, he hired two brothers from Nigeria, to pretend to attack him for \$3,500.

This made the spotlight on Smollett shine even brighter, but this time he was vilified as someone willing to use one of the most potent symbol of racism in the U.S. to further his career.

“The most vile and despicable part of it, if it’s true, is the noose,” Judge John Fitzgerald Lyke Jr., who is Black, said during Smollett’s first court appearance. “That symbol conjures up such evil in this country’s history.”

Smollett also became a national punch line. He was the subject of a “Saturday Night Live” skit and a host of Black celebrities, from NBA analyst Charles Barkley to comedian Dave Chappelle, took turns poking fun at him.

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Then came the anger that Smollett's fame accorded him influence that is out of reach for most. Reports indicated Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, at the request of former first lady Michelle Obama's onetime chief of staff, communicated with a member of Smollett's family early in the investigation. Foxx recused herself from the case then her office suddenly dropped the charges, and Foxx found herself at the center of a media firestorm as she refuted the suggestion that her office gave the television star a break.

All that set the stage for what turned a simple question of Smollett's innocence or guilt into a convoluted legal saga that has dragged on for nearly three years.

Trial was delayed in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought cases around the country to a halt for months. But also, charges were filed, dropped and filed again by a special prosecutor who was brought in to take over the case.

Smollett — whose career has since faded — will this week return to the glare of the media spotlight, but this time as he passes the forest of news cameras as he makes his way to and from court.

The producers of "Empire," on which he starred for four years, renewed his contract for the sixth and final season in 2019, but he never appeared in an episode. Nor has he released any music or given significant musical performances.

He has, however, directed an independent film, funded by his own production company, that is premiering at the American Black Film Festival this month. The movie, "B-Boy Blues" is an adaptation of a 1994 novel, the first in a series, about the lives of gay Black men in New York.

But once in court, what will unfold will be what may sound like a bad movie for the simple reason that a short movie is exactly what authorities have long maintained Smollett was trying to create.

Key witnesses will be the brothers, Abimbola and Olabinjo Osundairo, who say Smollett wrote them a check to stage the attack. They are expected to characterize Smollett as the star and director of an "attack" in full view of a surveillance camera that he mistakenly believed would record the whole event.

And, according to their lawyer, the brothers will also describe how Smollett drove them to the spot where the incident was to play out for a "dress rehearsal."

"He was telling them 'Here's a camera, there's a camera and here's where you are going to run away,'" said their lawyer, Gloria Rodriguez.

Associated Press reporter Andrew Dalton contributed from Los Angeles.

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the Jussie Smollett case.

USGS: Magnitude-7.5 earthquake strikes northern Peru

LIMA, Peru (AP) — An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.5 struck northern Peru early Sunday, damaging some buildings and blocking several roads with rubble.

While the quake was extremely strong, it was relatively deep — measured at 112 kilometers (70 miles) — which usually reduces the possibility of damage and casualties.

The quake occurred at 5:52 a.m. (1052 GMT) and its epicenter was in the Amazon region, 42 kilometers (26 miles) north northwest of the city of Barranca. It had a magnitude of 7.5, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Part of a 16th century church in La Jalca district in the Amazon region collapsed and three people were lightly injured, Mayor Walter Culqui told Peru's RPP radio.

Falling stones blocked several highways in the Amazonas and Cajamarca regions in Peru, and the tremor was felt nearly 800 kilometers (500 miles) away in the capital of Lima, where some people rushed out of their homes in alarm.

A church in the Loja municipality in neighboring Ecuador was also partly damaged. The tremor was also felt in parts of Colombia and Brazil.

Earthquakes are common in Peru, which falls within the Pacific Ring of Fire where 85% of the planet's seismic activity takes place.

In French Pantheon, Josephine Baker makes history yet again

By ARNO PEDRAM and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France is inducting Josephine Baker — Missouri-born cabaret dancer, French World War II spy and civil rights activist — into its Pantheon, the first Black woman honored in the final resting place of France's most revered luminaries.

On Tuesday, a coffin carrying soils from the U.S., France and Monaco — places where Baker made her mark — will be deposited inside the domed Pantheon monument overlooking the Left Bank of Paris. Her body will stay in Monaco, at the request of her family.

French President Emmanuel Macron decided on her entry into the Pantheon, responding to a petition. In addition to honoring an exceptional figure in French history, the move is meant to send a message against racism and celebrate U.S.-French connections.

"She embodies, before anything, women's freedom," Laurent Kupferman, the author of the petition for the move, told The Associated Press.

Baker was born in 1906, in St. Louis, Missouri. At 19, having already divorced twice, had relationships with men and women, and started a performing career, she moved to France following a job opportunity.

"She arrives in France in 1925, she's an emancipated woman, taking her life in her hands, in a country of which she doesn't even speak the language," Kupferman said.

She met immediate success on the Theatre des Champs-Elysees stage, where she appeared topless and wearing a famed banana belt. Her show, embodying the colonial time's racist stereotypes about African women, caused both condemnation and celebration.

"She was that kind of fantasy: not the Black body of an American woman but of an African woman," Theatre des Champs-Elysees spokesperson Ophélie Lachaux told the AP. "And that's why they asked Josephine to dance something 'tribal,' 'savage,' 'African'-like."

Baker's career took a more serious turn after that, as she learned to speak five languages and toured internationally. She became a French citizen after her marriage in 1937 to industrialist Jean Lion, a Jewish man who later suffered from anti-Semitic laws of the collaborationist Vichy regime.

In September 1939, as France and Britain declared war against Nazi Germany, Baker got in touch with the head of the French counterintelligence services. She started working as an informant, traveling, getting close to officials and sharing information hidden on her music sheets, according to French military archives.

Researcher and historian Géraud Létang said Baker lived "a double life between, on the one side, the music hall artist, and on the other side, another secret life, later becoming completely illegal, of intelligence agent."

After France's defeat in June 1940, she refused to play for the Nazis who occupied Paris and moved to southwestern France. She continued to work for the French Resistance, using her artistic performances as a cover for her spying activities.

That year, she notably brought into her troupe several spies working for the Allies, allowing them to travel to Spain and Portugal. "She risks the death penalty or, at least, the harsh repression of the Vichy regime or of the Nazi occupant," Létang said.

The next year, seriously ill, Baker left France for North Africa, where she gathered intelligence for Gen. Charles De Gaulle, including spying on the British and the Americans — who didn't fully trust him and didn't share all information.

She also raised funds, including from her personal money. It is estimated she brought the equivalent of 10 million euros (\$11.2 million) to support the French Resistance.

In 1944, Baker joined a female group in the Air Force of the French Liberation Army as a second lieutenant. The group's logbook notably mentions a 1944 incident off the coast of Corsica, when Senegalese soldiers from colonial troops fighting in the French Liberation Army helped Baker out of the sea. After her plane had to make an emergency landing, they brought "the shipwrecked to the shores, on their large shoulders, Josephine Baker in the front," the logbook writes.

Baker also organized concerts for soldiers and civilians near combat zones. After the defeat of the Nazis,

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she went to Germany to sing for former prisoners and deportees freed from the camps.

"Baker's involvement in politics was individual and atypical," said Benetta Jules-Rosette, a leading scholar on Baker's life and a sociology professor at the University of California, San Diego.

After the war, Baker got involved in anti-racist politics. She fought against American segregation during a 1951 performance tour of the U.S., causing her to be targeted by the FBI, labeled a communist and banned from her homeland for a decade. The ban was lifted by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, and she returned to be the only woman to speak at the March on Washington, before Martin Luther King's famed "I Have a Dream" speech.

Back in France, she adopted 12 children from all over the world, creating a "rainbow tribe" to embody her ideal of "universal fraternity." She purchased a castle and land in the southwestern French town of Castelnaud-la-Chapelle, where she tried to build a city embodying her values.

"My mother saw the success of the rainbow tribe, because when we caused trouble as kids, she would never know who had done it because we never ratted on each other, risking collective punishment," one of Baker's sons, Brian Bouillon Baker, told the AP. "I heard her say to some friends 'I'm mad to never know who causes trouble, but I'm happy and proud that my kids stand united.'"

Toward the end of her life, she ran into financial trouble, was evicted and lost her properties. She received support from Princess Grace of Monaco, who offered Baker a place for her and her children to live.

She rebuilt her career but in 1975, four days after the triumphant opening of a comeback tour, she fell into a coma and passed away from a brain hemorrhage. She was buried in Monaco.

While Baker is widely appreciated in France, some critics of Macron question why he chose an American-born figure as the first Black woman in the Pantheon, instead of someone who rose up against racism and colonialism in France itself.

The Pantheon, built at the end of the 18th century, honors 72 men and five women, including Baker. She joins two other Black figures in the mausoleum: Gaullist resister Felix Eboué and famed writer Alexandre Dumas.

"These are people who have committed themselves, especially to others," Pantheon administrator David Medec told the AP. "It is not only excellence in a field of competence, it is really the question of commitment, commitment to others."

Jamey Keaten contributed from Castelnaud-la-Chapelle, France.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Nov. 29, the 333rd day of 2021. There are 32 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 29, 2001, former Beatle George Harrison died in Los Angeles following a battle with cancer; he was 58.

On this date:

In 1864, a Colorado militia killed at least 150 peaceful Cheyenne Indians in the Sand Creek Massacre.

In 1910, British explorer Robert F. Scott's ship Terra Nova set sail from New Zealand, carrying Scott's expedition on its ultimately futile — as well as fatal — race to reach the South Pole first.

In 1929, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Richard E. Byrd, pilot Bernt Balchen, radio operator Harold June and photographer Ashley McKinney made the first airplane flight over the South Pole.

In 1947, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the partitioning of Palestine between Arabs and Jews; 33 members, including the United States, voted in favor of the resolution, 13 voted against while 10 abstained. (The plan, rejected by the Arabs, was never implemented.)

In 1961, Enos the chimp was launched from Cape Canaveral aboard the Mercury-Atlas 5 spacecraft, which orbited earth twice before returning.

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In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson named a commission headed by Earl Warren to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1972, the coin-operated video arcade game Pong, created by Atari, made its debut at Andy Capp's Tavern in Sunnyvale, California.

In 1981, film star Natalie Wood drowned in a boating accident off Santa Catalina Island, California, at age 43.

In 1987, a Korean Air 707 jetliner en route from Abu Dhabi to Bangkok was destroyed by a bomb planted by North Korean agents with the loss of all 115 people aboard.

In 2000, bracing the public for more legal wrangling, Vice President Al Gore said in a series of TV interviews that he was prepared to contest the Florida presidential vote until "the middle of December."

In 2008, Indian commandos killed the last remaining gunmen holed up at a luxury Mumbai hotel, ending a 60-hour rampage through India's financial capital by suspected Pakistani-based militants that killed 166 people.

In 2017, "Today" host Matt Lauer was fired for what NBC called "inappropriate sexual behavior" with a colleague; a published report accused him of crude and habitual misconduct with women around the office. Garrison Keillor, who'd entertained public radio listeners for 40 years on "A Prairie Home Companion," was fired by Minnesota Public Radio following allegations of inappropriate workplace behavior.

Ten years ago: Eurozone ministers sent Greece an 8 billion-euro (\$10.7 billion) Christmas rescue package to stem an immediate cash crisis. Hard-line Iranian protesters stormed British diplomatic compounds in what began as an apparent state-approved show of anger over the latest Western sanctions to punish Tehran for its nuclear program. American Airlines' parent company, AMR Corp., filed for bankruptcy protection, citing high labor and fuel costs and the weak economy. (American Airlines emerged from bankruptcy protection in December 2013 as it merged with US Airways.)

Five years ago: President-elect Donald Trump continued to fill out his Cabinet, choosing former Goldman Sachs executive Steven Mnuchin (mih-NOO'-shin) as secretary of the Treasury Department, Georgia Rep. Tom Price to oversee the nation's health care system, and Elaine Chao, a former labor secretary and the wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, to lead the Department of Transportation. Regional leaders and tens of thousands of Cubans jammed the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana, celebrating the late Fidel Castro on the spot where he delivered fiery speeches to mammoth crowds in the years after he seized power.

One year ago: Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that New York City would reopen its school system to in-person learning, and increase the number of days a week many children attend class, even as the coronavirus pandemic intensified in the city. Nearly 1.2 million people went through U.S. airports, according to the Transportation Security Administration; it was the highest daily number since before the pandemic.

Today's Birthdays: Hall of Fame sportscaster Vin Scully is 94. Blues singer-musician John Mayall is 88. Actor Diane Ladd is 86. Songwriter Mark James is 81. Composer-musician Chuck Mangione is 81. Country singer Jody Miller is 80. Pop singer-musician Felix Cavaliere (The Rascals) is 79. Former Olympic skier Suzy Chaffee is 75. Actor Jeff Fahey is 69. Movie director Joel Coen is 67. Actor-comedian-celebrity judge Howie Mandel is 66. Former Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano (neh-pahl-ih-TAN'-oh) is 64. Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is 62. Actor Cathy Moriarty is 61. Actor Kim Delaney is 60. Actor Tom Sizemore is 60. Actor Andrew McCarthy is 59. Actor Don Cheadle is 57. Actor-producer Neill Barry is 56. Pop singer Jonathan Knight (New Kids on the Block) is 53. Rock musician Martin Carr (Boo Radleys) is 53. Actor Jennifer Elise Cox is 52. Baseball Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera is 52. Actor Larry Joe Campbell is 51. Rock musician Frank Delgado (Deftones) is 51. Actor Paola Turbay is 51. Contemporary Christian singer Crowder is 50. Actor Gena Lee Nolin is 50. Actor Brian Baumgartner is 49. Actor Julian Ovenden is 46. Actor Anna (AH'-nuh) Faris is 45. Gospel singer James Fortune is 44. Actor Lauren German is 43. Rapper The Game is 42. Actor Janina Gavankar is 41. Rock musician Ringo Garza is 40. Actor-comedian John Milhiser is 40. Actor Lucas Black is 39. Actor Diego Boneta is 31. Actor Lovie Simone (TV: "Greenleaf") is 23.