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July 7-9

Legion at Clark Tourney

July 8-11

U12 State Tourney in Parker

July 11

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Webster, DH (All Groups),
Nelson Field

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Doland, 1 game (All Groups),
Falk Field

6:30 p.m.: U10 hosts Doland, 1 game (R/W)

6 p.m.: U12 SB at Webster, DH

July 12

6 p.m.: Legion at Milbank, 1 game

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Milbank, DH

6 p.m.: U12 SB at Britton, DH

6 p.m.: U8 SB at Clark, DH

July 13

5 p.m.: Legion at Mobridge, 1 game

6:30 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Mobridge, 1 game

5:30 p.m.: U10 vs. Renegades in Watertown, DH,
(R/B)

July 14

5:30 p.m.: Legion hosts Webster, DH

Jr. Teeners just be completed by this date

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



*It is impossible to keep a straight face in
the presence of one or more kittens.*

Cynthia E. Varnado

6 p.m.: U12 SB hosts Faulkton, DH

6 p.m.: U8 SB at Claremont, 1 game

7 p.m.: U10 SB at Claremont, 1 game

Jul 15-17

U10 State Tourney in Salem

July 18

6 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Frederick, DH

July 19-21

Legion Regions at Redfield

July 22-24

Jr. Teeners State Tourney at Hayti

July 23-24

Jr. Legion Region

July 29-Aug. 2

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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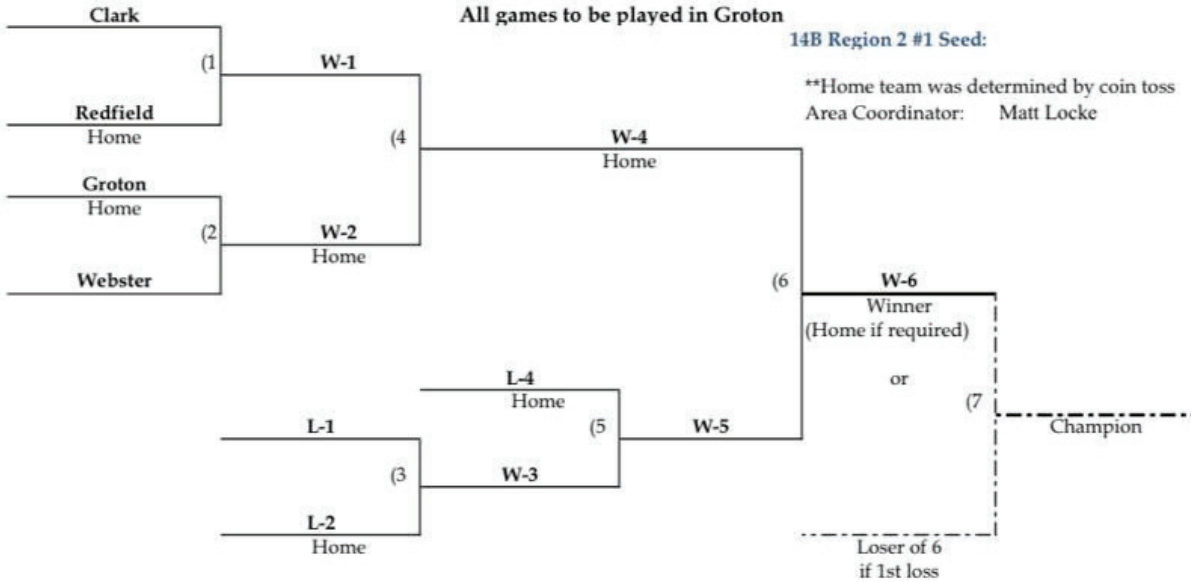
Department of SD VFW Baseball
14U Class B Region 2 Bracket

Starts Sunday

All games to be played in Groton

14B Region 2 #1 Seed:

**Home team was determined by coin toss
Area Coordinator: Matt Locke



Game Dates and Times

Date: Sunday 7/10
Game 1 - 12 PM
Game 2 - 2 PM
Game 3 - 5 PM
Game 4 - 7 PM

Game Dates and Times

Date: Monday 7/11
Game 5 - 5 PM
Game 6 - 7 PM

Game Dates and Times

Date: Tuesday 7/??
Game 7 - 6 PM (If required)

Random numbers were used to determine seeding

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"Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows"

Wednesday, July 13 at Noon
Ladies Luncheon & Program

Silent Auction
10:30 - 11:30
Door Prizes

Ty Eschenbaum
will be the speaker

Advance tickets
required \$10.00



Call Kay Espeland 492-3507 or
Alice Jean Peterson 216-2835

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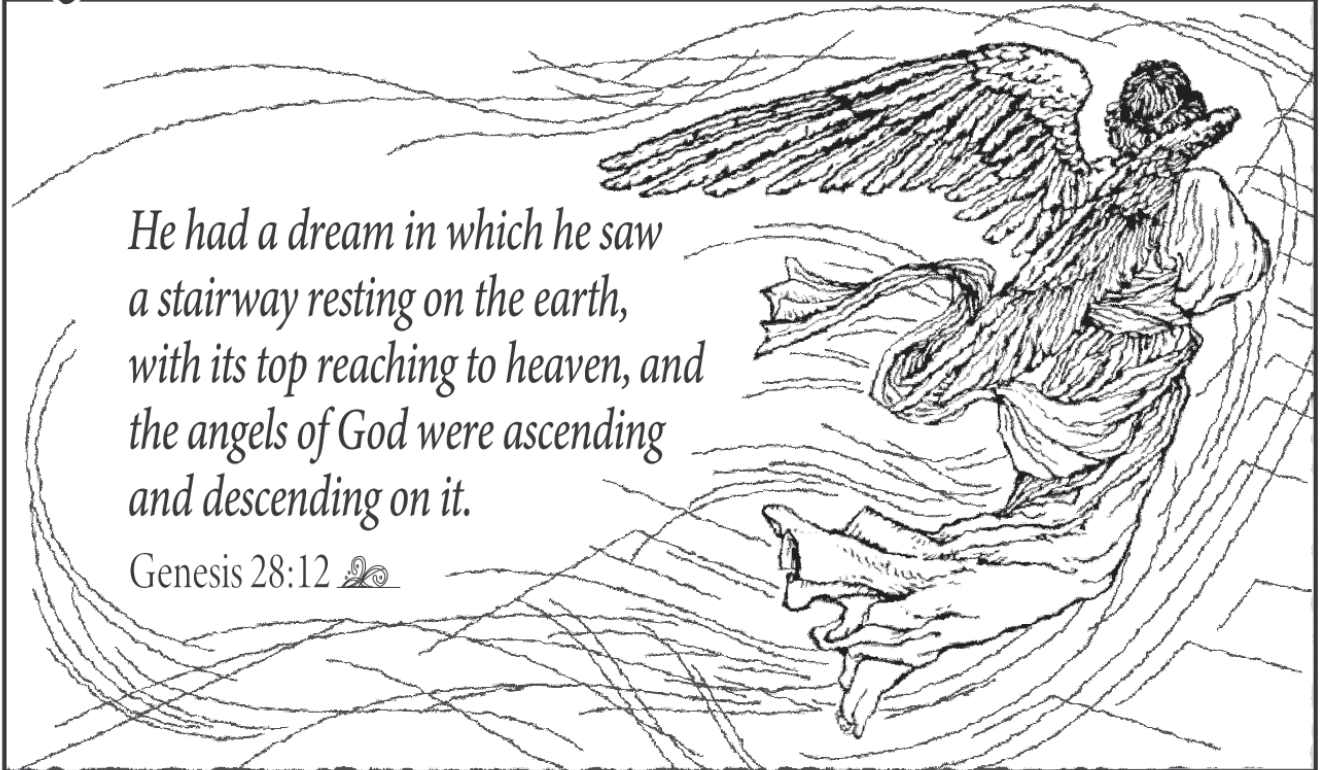
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

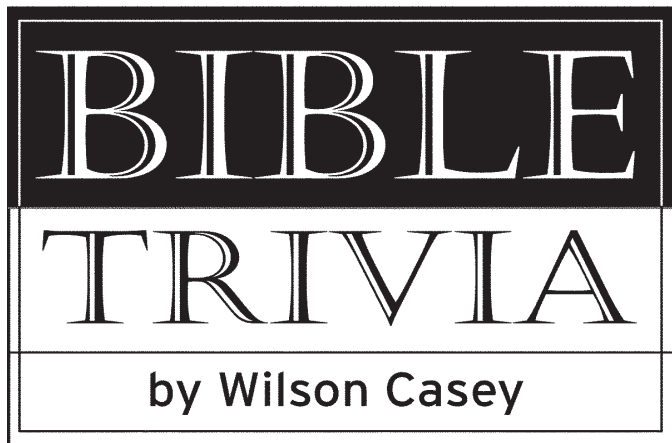
He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Genesis 28:12 



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by Healthy Exchanges

Butter Bean Salad

Need a last-minute potluck dish? Here's a side that's plain and simple -- but oh, so tasty!

- 2 (15-ounce) cans butter beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup chopped celery
- <00BD> cup chopped green onion
- <00BC> cup (2-ounce) jar chopped pimiento, drained
- <00BD> cup fat-free French dressing
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes

In a medium bowl, combine butter beans, celery, onion and pimiento. Add French dressing and parsley. Mix well to combine. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Gently stir again just before serving. Makes 6 (1/2-cup) servings.

* Each serving equals: 112 calories, 0g fat, 5g protein, 23g carb., 555mg sodium, 5g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch/Carb., 1 Meat, 1/2 Vegetable.

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

2. From Deuteronomy 10: What tribe of Israel had the responsibility for moving the Ark of the Covenant? Gad, Dan, Levi, Asher

3. Which Old Testament prophet married an adulterous woman named Gomer? Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah

4. From John 11: How many days was Lazarus in the grave before being resurrected? 1, 2, 3, 4

5. What city is associated with Joshua and the blowing of the trumpets? Jericho, Bethel, Bethlehem, Cana

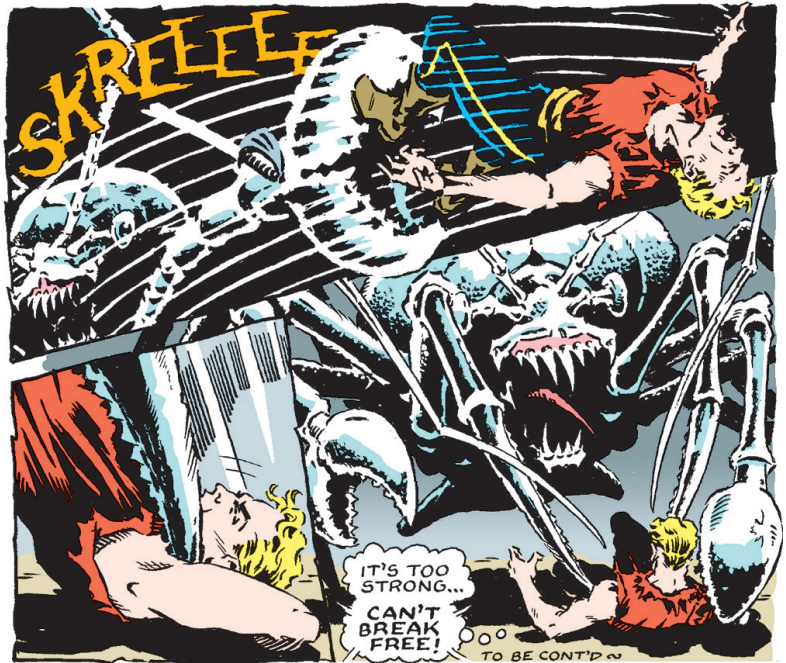
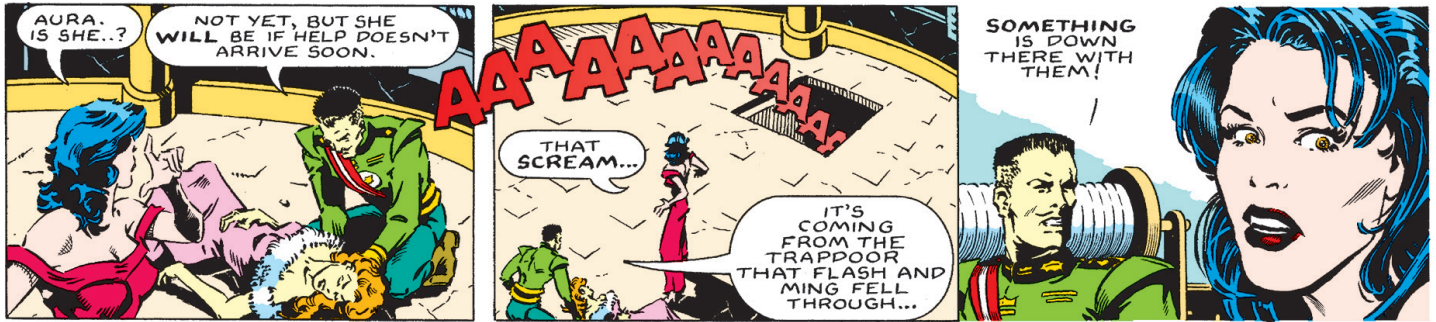
6. Where did Elijah bring a widow's son back to life? Smyrna, Corinth, Sardis, Zarephath

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Levi; 3) Hosea; 4) 4; 5) Jericho; 6) Zarephath

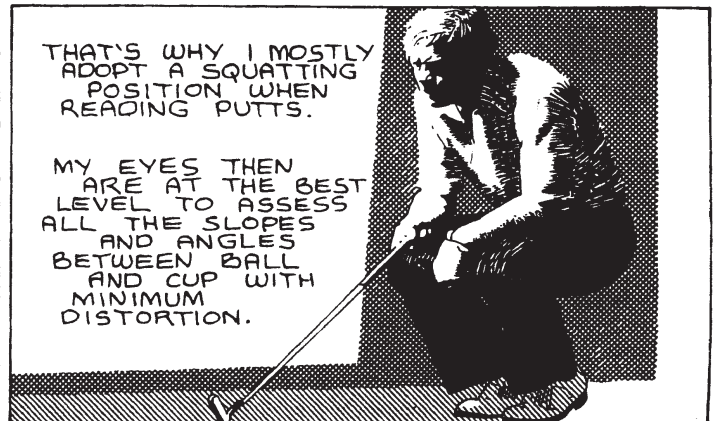
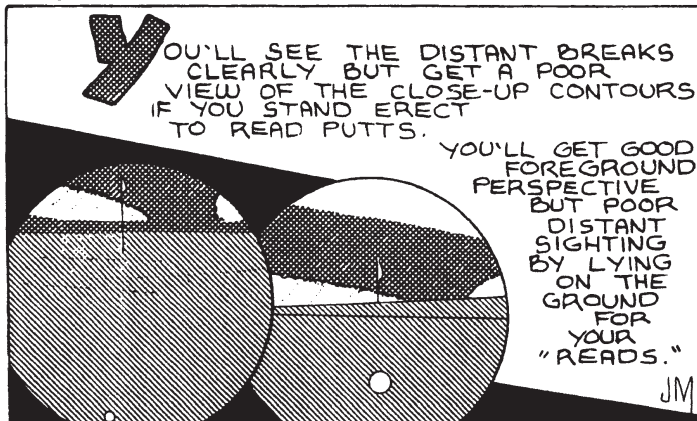
"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



Osteoporosis Treatment Could Put Jaw at Risk



DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 80-year-old female in good health except for a diagnosis of osteopenia. My primary care doctor has prescribed medication for my osteopenia. I have periodontal disease and have been advised by my periodontal specialist not to take medication for osteopenia due to deterioration of the jawbone. I think I am in a lose-lose situation. I spoke to my internal medicine doctor, and he said he was concerned about a hip fracture if I don't take the osteopenia medication. I don't want to take a chance on the jaw deteriorating. Please give me your opinion on the best course of action. -- G.M.

ANSWER: Osteopenia, also called low bone density, is a risk factor for osteoporosis. The risk of developing a fracture depends on a person's age and sex, height and weight, results of their bone density test and presence of certain other medical risk factors, including previous fracture, use of glucocorticoid drugs like prednisone, smoking and rheumatoid arthritis. Fracture risk is commonly estimated by the FRAX tool (www.sheffield.ac.uk/FRAX/). If the estimated hip fracture risk is 3%, or the combined risk of any fracture is 20%, then medication treatment is usually recommended. Getting your FRAX result is a critical number to have to help make an informed decision. You will need the exact results of your bone density.

If your risk is not so high that medication is recommended, there are many things you can do to help your bone density. These include adequate dietary calcium, supplemental vitamin D, regular exercise -- especially weight-bearing and strengthening exercises -- and avoiding smoking and excess alcohol. A home evaluation to reduce fall risk may be of benefit.

If your fracture risk is already higher than the above threshold, medication would normally be prescribed in addition to lifestyle treatments. Antiresorptive treatments, such as alendronate (Fosamax) or other bisphosphonate drugs, do increase the risk for jawbone damage, and given what your periodontist has recommended, I would avoid not only these drugs but also denosumab (Prolia), which works similarly by decreasing bone resorption. Although I am not an expert, I would consider treatment with a medicine like teriparatide, which has been used as a treatment for people with jaw osteonecrosis. This medicine works by stimulating bone growth and has a good safety record.

DEAR DR. ROACH: The blood bank nurses have a hard time finding a vein in either arm almost every time I go to donate platelets. I drink a lot of water the day before and 16 ounces the day of, but no luck. Is there anything I can do to make my veins easier to find? Does weight have anything to do with it? -- N.K.

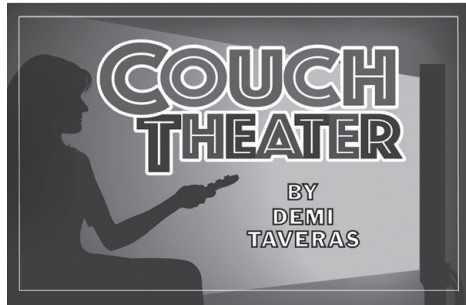
ANSWER: In addition to the fluid intake, keeping the arm warm makes the veins more prominent. Keeping the arm down (below your heart) for a good while may also help.

People who are overweight sometimes have veins that are harder to find, but that's not always the case.

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

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Joey King stars in "The Princess"

Courtesy of Hulu

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness (PG-13) -- Taking place after the events of "WandaVision" and "Spider Man: No Way Home" in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the second Doctor Strange film follows Strange as he meets America Chavez, a young girl from another universe who is being sought for her power to travel through the multiverse. Strange also meets Wanda Maximoff, who, since "WandaVision," has been taken over by the Darkhold and converted into the merciless Scarlet Witch. Strange doesn't realize this and reveals America's powers, inciting Wanda to use America to her advantage. Strange must now fight to protect America from a witch blinded with rage, all while traveling through alternate universes. Sounds easy enough. (Disney+)

House of Gucci (R) -- This fashionable film is quite the intriguing watch, especially for those who have no prior knowledge about Gucci's history. Lady Gaga portrays Patrizia, a young woman who works with her father at his trucking firm, right when she meets Maurizio Gucci (Adam Driver) at a party. Maurizio is a law student, but his father, Rodolfo, owns 50% interest in the Gucci fashion house, which Maurizio will inevitably inherit. Patrizia and Maurizio hit it off easily, albeit with some of the romance preplanned by Patrizia, and she pushes him to obtain full ownership of his fashion house. Now putting Maurizio at odds with other members of his family, it's only a matter of time before the power-hunger inside Patrizia and Maurizio gets the better of them. (Amazon Prime)

The Princess (R) -- Joey King, who you might've seen in the "Kissing Booth" trilogy or "The Act" as Gypsy Rose Blanchard, stars as the titular character in this nutty period piece out on streaming now. It's the story we've all heard before: A princess, due to wed a very wicked man who overtakes her kingdom, gets locked away in a tower. But what makes this film unique is the pure chaos that follows this headstrong princess; fully trained in combat, the princess furiously fights -- and by fight, I mean putting fully grown men down on their backs -- her way out of the tower and refuses to rest until she avenges her kingdom and slays the horrible man in charge. (Hulu)

Hello, Goodbye, and Everything in Between (TV-14) -- Clare and Aidan are in their senior year of high school and face the question presented to every high-school couple of that age: Are you two going to make it work through college? Well, Clare and Aidan surprisingly have got it all figured out. They made a pact to break up before they leave for college in an attempt to avoid either of them getting their heart broken. So, on their final date before going away, they decide to relive all of their firsts to close their chapter out -- but what they didn't expect is that their final date might have the opposite effect than they intended. This bittersweet rom-com is out now. (Netflix)

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FLASH BACK POP, ROCK & SOUL TRIVIA BY MICK HARPER

1. How did the duet "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" come about?
2. Name the group that released "Baby Come Back."
3. The Weavers and the Kingston Trio released covers of "Wimoweh." What is the song's alternate name?
4. Which song accompanied the Dancing Baby (aka Baby Cha-Cha) on the Ally McBeal television show?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "We can go dancing, we can go walking, as long as we're together."

Answers

and played it on the air. The response was such that the record company had Streisand and Diamond record the duet.

2. Player, in 1977. Two members of the group wrote the song after breaking up with girlfriends.
3. "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." The original ("Mbube") was released in 1939 in South Africa and written in Zulu.
4. "Hooked on a Feeling," first done by B.J. Thomas in 1969.
5. "Take a Chance on Me," by ABBA in 1978. The original title of the song was "Billy Boy." In the U.S., the record sold even more than the group's "Dancing Queen."

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

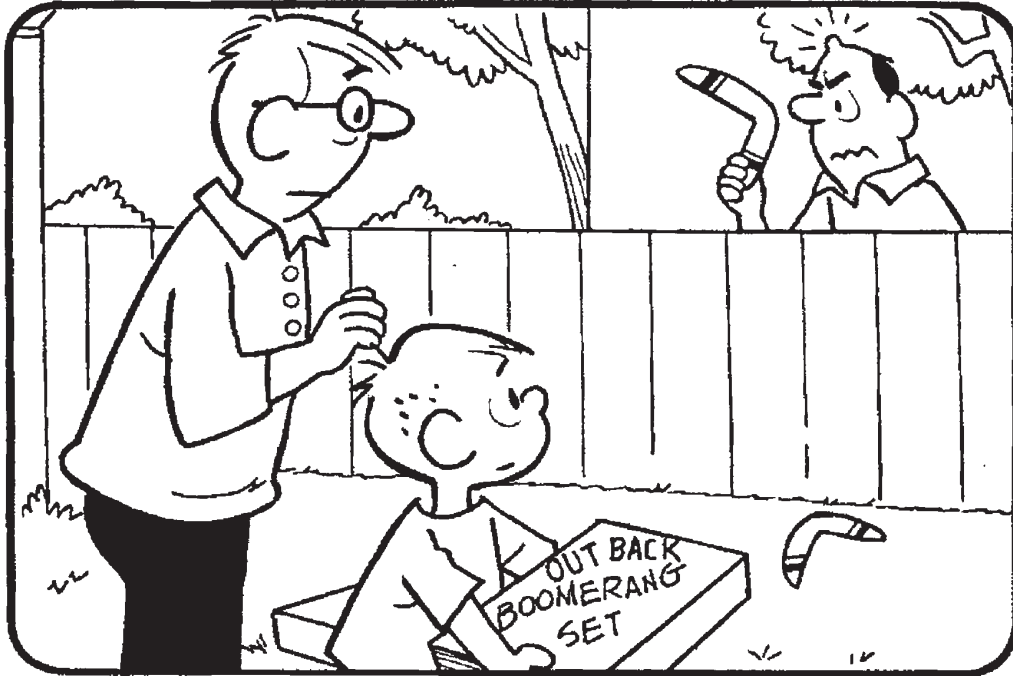
Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



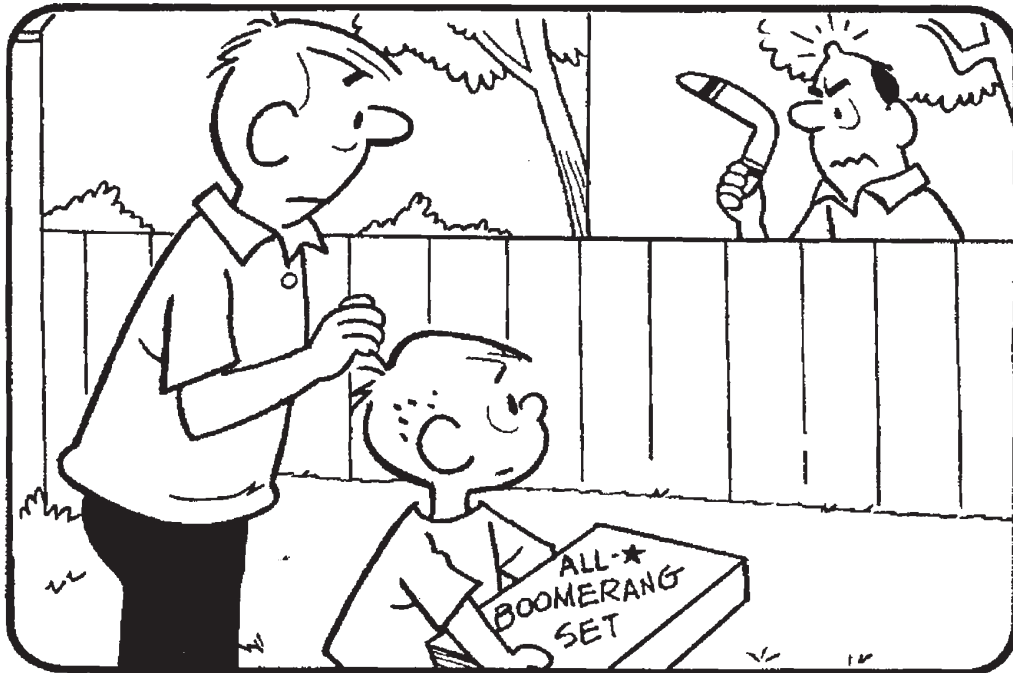
"That feels perfect! I'll take the next size smaller."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Glasses are missing. 2. Buttons are missing. 3. Sleeve is shorter. 4. Box is missing. 5. Name is missing. 6. Boomerang is missing.

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* Got lots of fresh herbs from your summer garden? Hang bunches upside down in a cool place for a week or so. Crumble the leaves into small jars. You've made your own dried herbs.

* "Want super-crunchy fries at home? Soak potato pieces in very cold water for an hour (fridge is best, or add ice often); dry and fry. Drain fries well, dust LIGHTLY with flour and quick-fry one more time for only a minute or so." -- T.C. in Idaho

* If you want to cool your canned drinks quickly, add water to the cooler with a lot of ice, submerge all drinks under the ice line, and wait about 20 minutes. Without the water, it takes much longer. The water extends the surface contact of the ice.

* To keep your ladder from sinking into soft sand or dirt, put each leg into a can or bucket. It creates a much larger surface area, thereby stabilizing the legs.

* If you run out of bleach, add 4 tablespoons of hydrogen peroxide to a small load of white laundry.

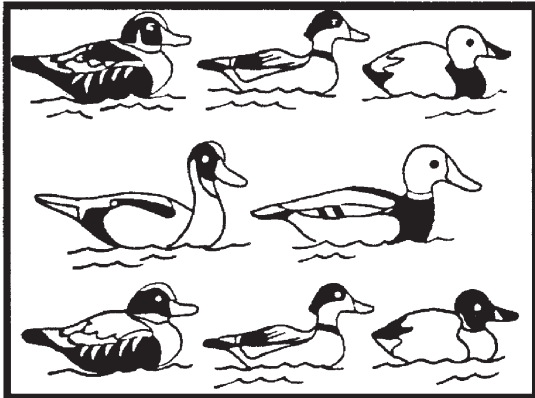
* Be certain to use only distilled water in your iron. The water from the tap can leave mineral stains on clothing, and will kill your iron if you do it all the time. -- R.E. in Louisiana

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

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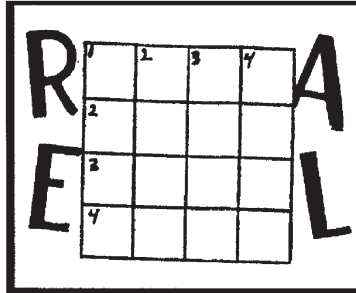


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DUCK SCOOP! Now, here's the scoop — two of the ducks above look enough alike to be twins. Which two is for you to decide.

Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman



REAL WORD POSER TO PONDER

PUZZLISTS, get real. Object of this exercise is to form a word square using only the four letters of the word REAL. That is to say, you are asked to find words comprised of letters R, E, A or L (used one or more times as necessary), to find four four-letter words that read the same both across and down.

Definitions:

1. Not exactly plentiful.
2. Kind of a code.
3. Aft section of ship.
4. Husband of an English countess.

Remember, words are to be formed using letters R, E, A or L.

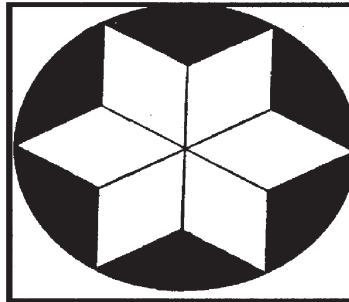
Time limit: Two minutes.

1. Rare. 2. Area. 3. Rear. 4. Earl.

KNOW DOUBT! "It is better to know — than to know what ain't so," said Josh Billings. What seven-letter word is missing? Take a guess.

Missing word is "nothing."

SIGHT PLAN! Just what design do you see in the drawing at right? It all depends on how you look at it. For instance, it may appear simply as a hexagonal figure consisting of six diamonds. Then again, it may appear as a cube stacked upon other similar cubes. Or, presto chango, it may appear as two cubes above, one cube below.



It's an illusory design, of course, that tends to change before your very eyes.

TIGER

by **BUD BLAKE**



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Hotel amenity
 4 Beach bucket
 8 " — it going?"
 12 Sandwich meat
 13 Roughly
 14 "Garfield" dog
 15 Class that includes newts and frogs
 17 Style
 18 Corn serving
 19 Took the helm
 21 Clara of the Red Cross
 24 Guffaw syllable
 25 Lawyers' org.
 26 Label
 28 Potato, for one
 32 Toy block name
 34 "Uh-huh"
 36 The Big Easy acronym
 37 Put in office
 39 Sea, to Henri
 41 Kimono closer
 42 Nanny's charge
 44 Beach robe
 46 Boris' cartoon partner
 50 Twitch
 51 Hgt.
 52 Highway turn-

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18			19		20					
21	22				23		24					
25				26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36			
37				38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45			
46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53				54	55
56					57				58			
59					60					61		

- off
 56 Aachen article
 57 Snitch
 58 — -jongg
 59 June honorees
 60 Sheltered
 61 Group of seals
 6 Wheeler-dealer
 6 Egyptian deity
 7 Reluctant
 8 Four-bagger
 9 Air freshener target
 10 Broad
 11 Feeder filler
 16 Fez, e.g.
 20 "Dig in!"
 21 Hay bundle
 22 First victim
 23 Opposing vote
 27 Wrigley product
 29 Training site
 30 Exile isle
 31 Picnic spoiler
 33 Scale ranges
 35 Chest muscle
 38 Lean- — (sheds)
 40 Baby's toy
 43 Letter before iota
 45 Fragrant tree
 46 Must have
 47 Inter —
 48 See to
 49 Skater's leap
 53 — -de-France
 54 Chinese chairman
 55 Prof's degree

DOWN

- 1 Na Na lead-in
 2 Nonstick spray
 3 Electrical strength
 4 Christie sleuth
 5 Wall St.

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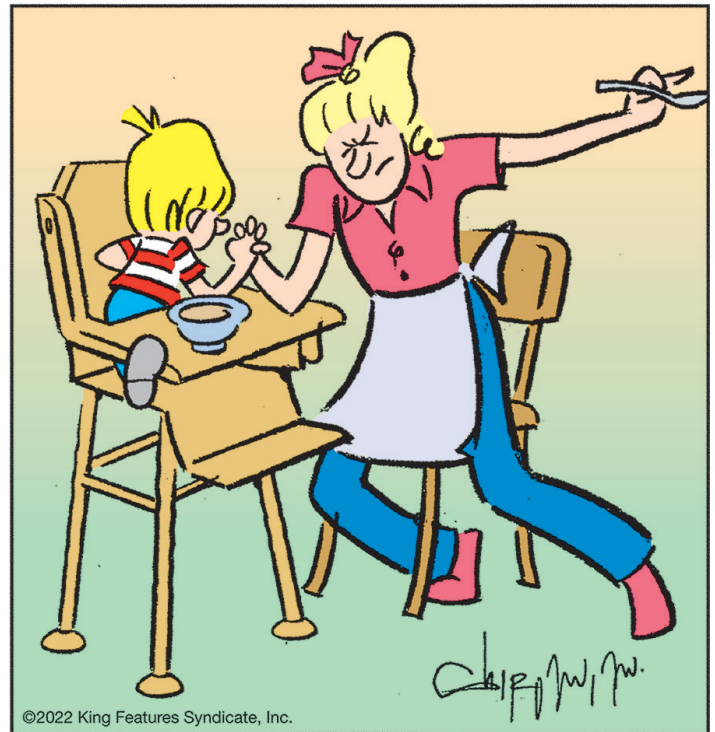
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

S	P	A		P	A	I	L		H	O	W	S
H	A	M		O	R	S	O		O	D	I	E
A	M	P	H	I	B	I	A		M	O	D	E
		E	A	R		S	T	E	E	R	E	D
B	A	R	T	O	N		H	A	R			
A	B	A		T	A	G		T	U	B	E	R
L	E	G	O		Y	U	P		N	O	L	A
E	L	E	C	T		M	E	R		O	B	I
			T	O	T		C	A	F	T	A	N
N	A	T	A	S	H	A		T	I	C		
E	L	E	V		E	X	I	T	R	A	M	P
E	I	N	E		T	E	L	L		M	A	H
D	A	D	S		A	L	E	E		P	O	D

LAFF - A - DAY



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Out on a Limb



by Gary Kopervas

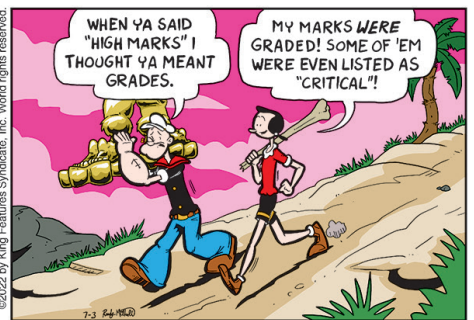
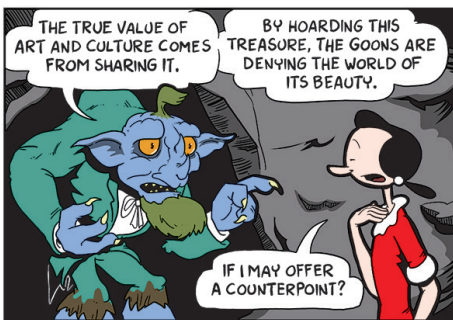
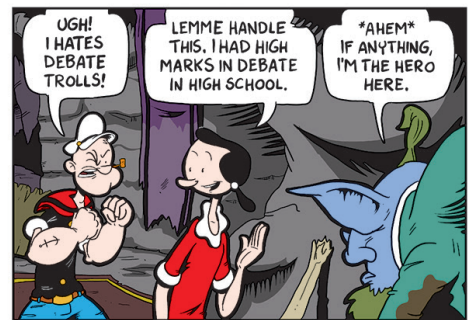
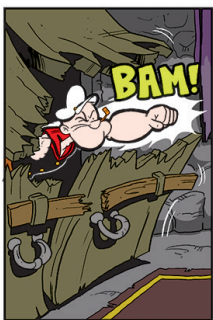
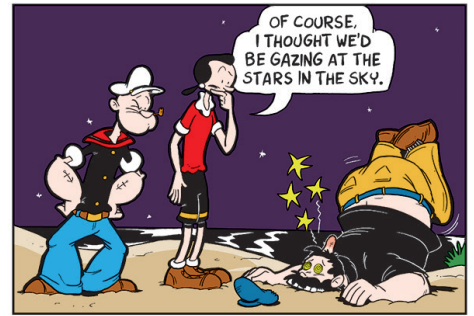
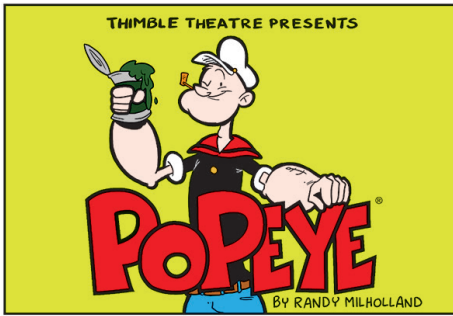
WEIGHT WATCHERS™
IN THE WILD.

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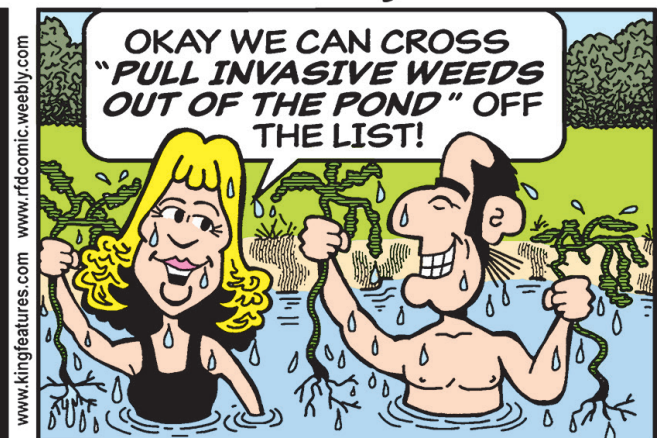
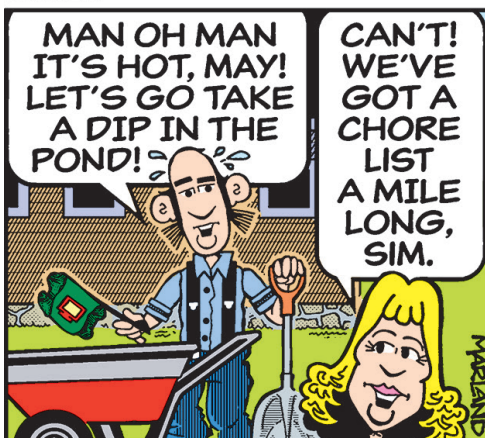
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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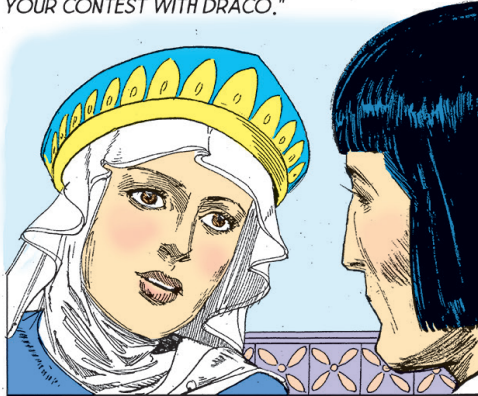
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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

MAEVE'S RAVEN SAILS FORTH FROM ALETA'S CHAMBER. BUKOTA SMILES: "THIS BODES WELL!" VAL REMAINS CONFUSED.

MAEVE EXPLAINS: "BUKOTA UNDERSTANDS THAT HELP WILL COME IN TIME. YOU MUST DELAY YOUR CONTEST WITH DRACO."



VAL SHRUGS-HIS WEIRD COURSE SEEMS SET BY HIS FEMALE ALLIES. SOON, WITH GAWAIN AND BUKOTA AS SECONDS, HE GOES TO ADDRESS THE CONTEST'S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.



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SIR GALAHAD OFFICIATES THE SORRY AFFAIR. HIS DEMEANOR BETRAYS A LACK OF PATIENCE CONCERNING SUCH FORMAL NONSENSE ...



... HIS MOOD IS SOURED FURTHER WHEN DRACO AND HIS ENTOURAGE BURST IN. DRACO POINTS, WITH HIGH DRAMA, TO VAL.

"AS THE AGGRIEVED PARTY, I DEMAND COMBAT TO THE DEATH- IMMEDIATELY!"

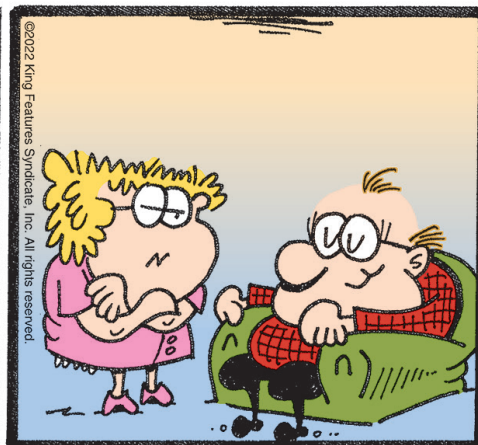
NEXT: Ratty conditions

The Spats

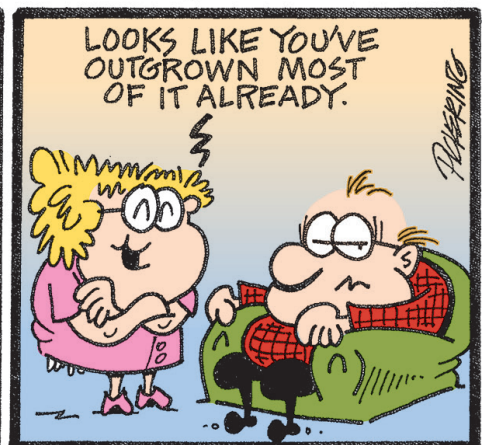
by Jeff Pickering



I'M GOING TO GROW MY HAIR OUT.



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LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE OUTGROWN MOST OF IT ALREADY.

PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Don't Disregard AARP

Starting when we reach age 50, our mailbox becomes flooded with frequent invitations to join AARP. At that age, we don't want to hear about anything for seniors because, in our eyes, we aren't seniors yet. We don't even qualify for a senior discount at local stores. So maybe we don't even look at the piles of literature and ads AARP sends. But maybe we should.

There's more to AARP than meets the eye. For a mere \$16 per year, we get a whole list of benefits and information.

The discounts themselves are impressive, in over a dozen categories. Want to send flowers or a gourmet fruit basket? Get a 20% discount. Traveling and need a rental car? Get a 30% discount. Save on RV insurance, prescriptions at Walmart, restaurants, hearing aids (20%), Ancestry.com (30%), Norton computer security (25%) and much more.

There is a jobs board (315 jobs in my ZIP code alone), an auto-buying program to help with dealer pricing, online games, local chapters and podcasts, a government watch ... everything designed to help seniors.

And then there is the AARP Bulletin monthly magazine that is sent by mail to members. If there's one thing you don't want to leave lying around unread, it's this. I just picked up a recent copy and discovered three must-read articles: Identifying phone scams when you get a call, cutting the cost of online groceries and, most important of all, an article on drug interactions. Imagine my surprise to see two of my drugs listed with information about contraindications no one ever told me about.

And what do they do with our membership fees? They advocate for us all over the country, especially with Social Security and Medicare.

If you're not signed up for AARP, it's something you should consider. If in doubt, go to www.aarp.org and scroll down the page to see what's new.

If you have questions, call AARP at 888-687-2277 (Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. EST)

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1. A popular darts game, a bat-and-ball sport and a kind of insect have what name in common?

2. In 1999, what New York Mets manager was ejected from a game but later returned to the dug-out disguised with sunglasses and a fake mustache?

3. What Italian Serie A football club has Vecchia Signora ("The Old Lady") and Le Zebre ("The Zebras") among its nicknames?

4. "Lion Fanfare and Downfield" and "Fight On, State" are songs played at what university's athletic events?

5. Name the Scottish driver who won both the Formula One World Drivers' Championship and the Indianapolis 500 in 1965.

6. What brand of swimwear and swim gear was founded in 1914 by Alexander MacRae in Sydney, Australia?

7. What sportscaster and "Inside the NBA" studio host penned the 2017 autobiography "Unscripted: The Unpredictable Moments That Make Life Extraordinary?"



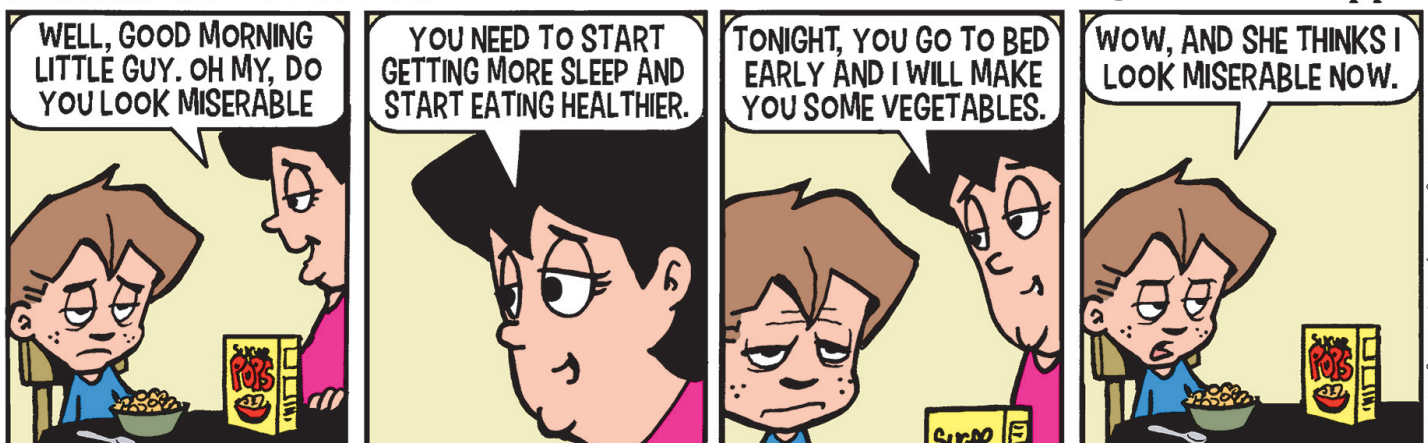
by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. Cricket.
 2. Bobby Valentine.
 3. Juventus F.C.
 4. Penn State University.
 5. Jim Clark.
 6. Speedo.
 7. Ernie Johnson Jr.
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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Snooping Out a Mystery Pooper

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Recently, a new neighbor with a big dog moved into one of the apartments next door. Since then, every morning there's a fresh deposit of dog poo on my front lawn. And not on the edge -- right in the middle of the lawn. Because it happens before sunrise each day, I suspect the new neighbor is letting their dog out, unleashed and unsupervised, to do its business wherever it pleases. How should I deal with this problem? I don't have clear proof that it's the new neighbor, but it sure smells like it. -- Disgusted in Dallas

Dear Disgusted: I'm with you. Owners need to be responsible for their pets, and they need to be good

neighbors by keeping their dogs on a leash and picking up after them.

There are a couple of ways to discover the culprit. The low-cost way is to wake up well before dawn and watch your front lawn. Snap a photo of the dog when it comes onto your property, but don't try to shoo it away -- you're gathering evidence. The high-cost way is to install a security camera with a motion sensor. Aim it so that it has a good view of your property but not other yards (it's a privacy issue). Set it to record when the motion sensor is triggered.

With or without proof, contact the property manager of the apartment building. Calmly explain the situation and your suspicions, and ask them to remind residents in writing about leash laws. Most property managers have a vested interest in keeping the neighbors happy and will cooperate to solve the problem.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* The cornea of the eye is the only body part without its own blood supply. Instead, it receives oxygen directly from the air.

* A duel between three people is called a truel.

* Ever chastised yourself for accidentally recording over your favorite cassette tape? Even NASA's been guilty of that one. The tapes containing the original footage of the Apollo 11 moonwalk were likely erased and reused to record satellite data.

* Prior to the invention of the eraser, you could

use a rolled up piece of white bread (sans crusts) to remove pencil marks.

* Japanese sumo wrestlers are bound by strict rules even when out of the ring, governing when they sleep and eat, and how they dress and speak in public. They are not allowed to drive cars and, if they're in the lower ranks of the sport, cannot have a phone or a girlfriend.

* Anatidaephobia is the fear that somewhere in the world, a duck or goose is watching you.

* Who hasn't wished on occasion for more hours in their day? Well, if you can wait a mere 140 million years, the average Earth day could be 25 hours long, as the planet is slowly -- very slowly! -- decelerating.

* In 2008, a 13-year-old boy was arrested for farting too much in school. The sheriff's office claimed he "continually disrupted his classroom environment" with intentional flatulence.

* Beauty masks in ancient Rome had one heck of an ingredients list, including placenta, excrement, sulfur, sheep's wool sweat, animal urine, ground oyster shells and bile.

* Mushrooms emit electrical signals to each other containing patterns similar to human speech.

Thought for the Day: "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art. It has no survival value; rather, it is one of those things which give value to survival." -- C.S. Lewis

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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

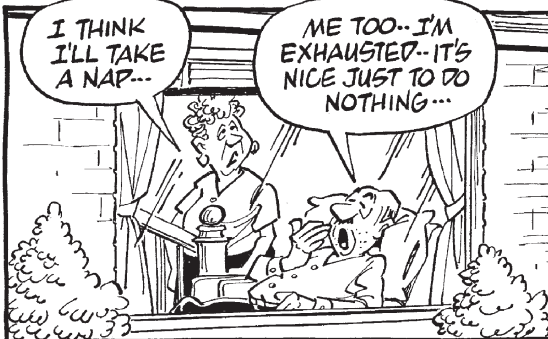
THE HOSPITAL DIETITIANS' MEETING IS OVER...
NOW FOR A COFFEE BREAK and SNACKS...



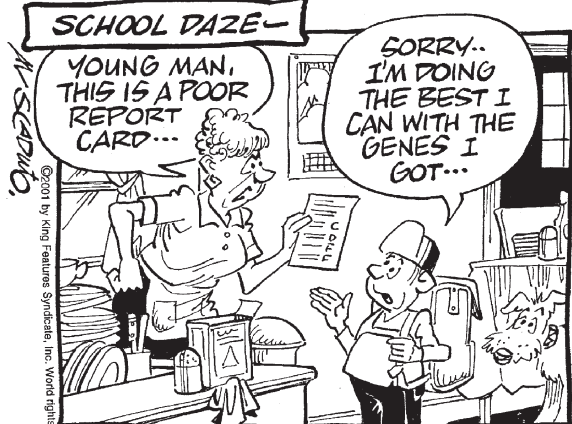
Thank to T. GUARINO, SAN FRANCISCO, CA.

PERFECT
TIMING
DEPT--
THIS ONLY
HAPPENS
WHEN
YOU'RE
DOG-
TIRED...

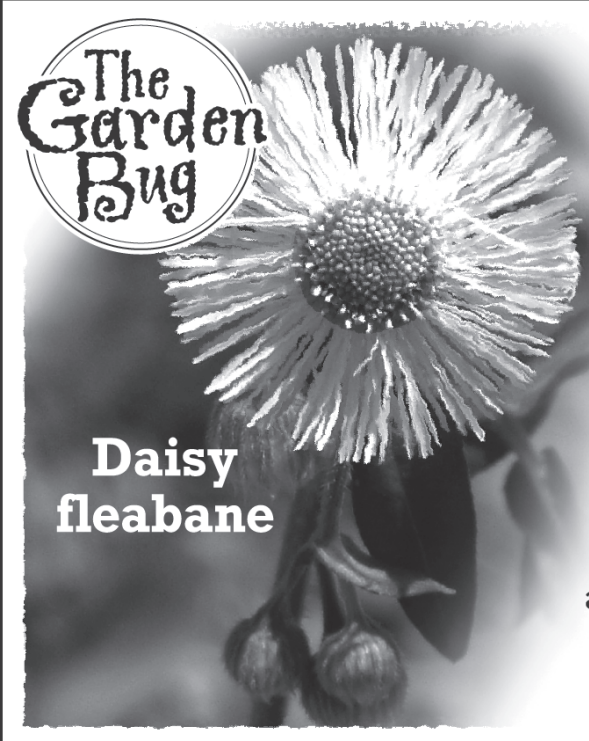
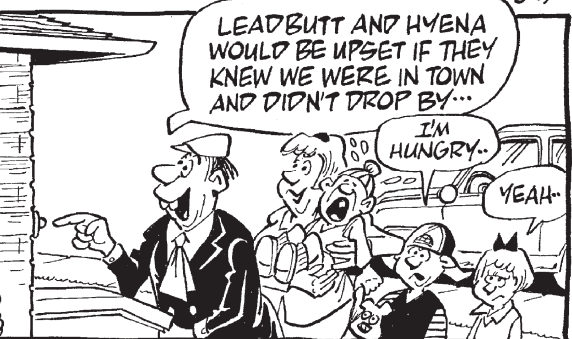
Thank to
P. FIEGEL,
DENVER, COLO.



BY AL SCADUTO



Thank to DENNA REPLANE, SARASOTA, FL.



Daisy
fleabane

Often dismissed as weeds, these plants provide nectar and pollen for bees, flies, wasps and butterflies. Some insects and animals such as deer, rabbits, groundhogs and livestock may feed on the entire plant. It grows best in fields, along roadsides and around waste areas and reduces soil erosion.

— Brenda Weaver

Source: www.illinoiswildflowers.info

Caregiver Reassessments Paused



by Freddy Groves

If you're a family caregiver, or if you're a veteran receiving family care services, heads up: The Department of Veterans Affairs is suspending the annual reassessments for those in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

At the same time, at least for now while they review the program, the VA won't change stipends based on a reassessment nor remove anyone from the program.

They will, however, continue to do reassessments when there is a reason, such as the veteran or caregiver is asking for an increase in the stipend or if

there's a need for more personal care services. The VA also will keep making wellness visits.

If you aren't part of the program and want to be, the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) is for veterans who were seriously injured (or who now have a serious illness) while in active duty on or before May 7, 1975, or on or after Sept. 11, 2001, if they meet two criteria:

- Service-connected disability of 70% or more.
- Need personal care services for at least six months because of inability to perform activities of daily living or have a need for supervision, protection or instruction.

Primary caregivers can receive a monthly stipend, access to CHAMPVA health care insurance and 30 days of respite care per year for the veteran so the caregiver can take a break. Other caregiver benefits include online and in-person educational sessions, counseling, use of telehealth and techniques and skills for caring for the veteran.

Apply online at www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp or download VA Form 10-10CG on that same page and send it in by mail. You also can hand the form in at your local VA medical center by contacting the caregiver support coordinator. For more info, call them at 855-260-3274 Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Do not send in any medical records with this application. They'll ask for it later.

See the fine print at www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-71.

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Wishing Well®



3	2	5	7	4	6	7	4	3	4	8	4	8
V	S	Y	E	Y	T	X	O	I	U	B	S	R
5	7	3	4	7	6	3	5	4	8	5	2	5
O	P	C	T	L	A	T	U	A	E	A	E	R
7	2	6	2	5	2	4	2	8	3	5	7	6
O	C	K	U	E	R	R	E	A	O	W	R	E
4	3	4	6	4	7	5	4	5	4	2	5	3
T	R	D	A	I	E	E	A	L	R	L	C	Y
6	2	3	2	8	2	5	7	3	5	4	6	5
F	O	I	V	K	E	O	N	S	M	Y	I	E
3	5	3	7	8	3	7	3	7	8	7	8	6
N	D	E	E	N	A	W	R	I	O	D	R	R
8	6	7	6	7	6	8	6	8	6	8	7	6
U	M	E	S	A	T	L	A	E	N	S	S	D

1. GEOGRAPHY: Which country has the most islands?
2. AD SLOGANS: Which product is advertised with the slogan “The snack that smiles back”?
3. MOVIES: Which animated movie features more than 10,000 balloons?
4. TELEVISION: Who did Jim Halpert marry in the long-running sitcom “The Office”?
5. HISTORY: Which country sold Alaska to the United States (1867) for \$7.2 million?
6. MUSIC: Which rock group had an album titled “Dark Side of the Moon”?
7. LITERATURE: Which novel introduces a character named Lisbeth Salander?
8. SCIENCE: What is the name for magma after it has erupted?
9. U.S. STATES: Which state was the first to join the union after the original 13 colonies?
10. ANATOMY: What is also known as the voice box in human anatomy?

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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Answers

1. Sweden
2. Goldfish crackers
3. “Up”
4. Pam Beesly
5. Russia
6. Pink Floyd
7. “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”
8. Lava
9. Vermont
10. Larynx

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Building Stronger Families Together

Strong families are the foundation of our communities and the backbone of our state. We need to continue to work together to support families across the state to ensure a brighter future for all of South Dakota. Since taking office, I have prioritized standing up for families across South Dakota, recognizing that stronger families will build stronger communities.

One critical way to create stronger families is through foster care—and particularly by recruiting more foster families. Unfortunately, we have plenty of children in need across our state, and we need to ensure that there are loving homes available for each of them. Children enter foster care because their own families are in crisis, and foster families come alongside kids who need a safe, stable, loving place to stay. We need foster parents in every single community in the state so that children can stay close to those things that are familiar to them, especially their families and schools.

In May 2021, I launched our “Stronger Families Together” initiative and set an ambitious goal: to recruit 300 new foster families each year in South Dakota. Thanks to the hard work of the Department of Social Services and South Dakota Kids Belong, we met that goal in our first year and have licensed 304 new foster families across the state. We have also engaged with 71 businesses and 31 churches who have pledged to help provide the community support that makes a real difference in the lives of these kids and families.

These are big achievements, but we still have work to do. Our goal is to recruit an additional 900 new licensed foster and adoptive families in South Dakota over the next three years and engage with even more business partners and faith leaders. Reaching these goals will take a lot of work, and we will need your help.

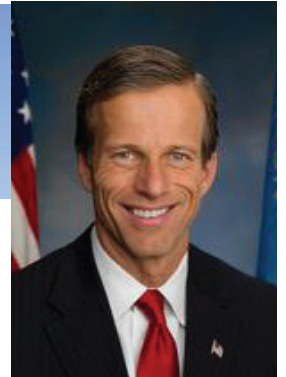
We currently have 13 Wrap Around teams across the state made up of 177 Wrap Members who help families by running errands, providing transportation, or helping with meals. These Wrap Members provide support to foster families while they support these kids. This prevents our foster families from being overwhelmed or burning out, and it sends a message that our communities are committed to helping these kids, together.

Growing up, I had a brother who joined our family through foster care, so I understand how significant—and demanding—it can be to serve as a foster family. As a mother and grandmother, I also understand that a support structure is critical. We have to make sure foster families know that they are not alone.

Please ask yourself: How can I help? There are so many ways that anyone can help a foster family succeed. Check in and really ask how they’re doing. Give them a call. Send a text or an email. Bring them a meal. Let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them. Find out what you can do to make their lives easier. And this is not only a call to individuals, but also to faith and business communities.

To learn about opportunities to get involved, please visit www.StrongerFamiliesTogether.com. We have a tremendous opportunity to strengthen our state through our children. Let’s work together to get it done.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Supporting South Dakota Agriculture

Whether it's a natural disaster or an ordinary day, farmers and ranchers are always at the top of my mind. Agriculture is the lifeblood of the South Dakota economy, and I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure that our farmers and ranchers have the resources they need to help feed our country. I'm fortunate to be a longtime member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, which gives me an important platform from which to address the needs of South Dakota ag producers.

Right now, a big focus of mine is the 2023 farm bill. I've already begun to hold a series of roundtables to hear from South Dakota farmers and ranchers about what they need from the 2023 bill, and I plan to continue introducing proposals that I hope to get included in it.

My Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Improvement Act, which I introduced in March, would make CRP grazing a more attractive option by providing cost-share payments for all CRP practices for the establishment of grazing infrastructure, including fencing and water distribution. It would also increase the annual payment limit for CRP, which has not changed since 1985, to help account for inflation and the increase in land value.

I'm also working with colleagues from other agriculture states on legislation based on my conversations with South Dakota farmers and ranchers. I introduced the Agriculture Innovation Act with Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.). Currently the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) collects reams of data on conservation practices. The problem is that a lot of this data is often not analyzed and presented in a way that would be useful for producers.

The legislation Sen. Klobuchar and I have introduced would provide for better processing and development of the data USDA collects so farmers and ranchers can evaluate the impact of conservation and other production practices on things like soil health, crop yields, and profitability. Our bill would make it easier for producers to decide what conservation practices to adopt by, among other things, helping identify the ways conservation practices can improve their bottom line.

In addition to farm bill priorities, I've been spending a lot of time focused on trade, which has played a large part in America's economic success for decades. Strong trade policy is critical for American ag producers, who depend on exporting their products around the globe. It is unacceptable that the Biden administration has dropped the ball on pursuing increased market access for American producers.

I recently led a letter with 23 of my Senate Republican colleagues to the U.S. trade representative and the secretary of agriculture urging them to prioritize increased access to foreign markets for American producers, including – and especially – American ag producers. Unfortunately, the administration has not made market access commitments a priority in its trade agenda, and the administration has failed to pursue any ambitious market-opening initiatives or comprehensive trade agreements.

Another issue I'm committed to addressing is America's beef labeling system. As South Dakotans know, cattle producers in our state produce some of the highest quality beef in the world. But the current labeling system for beef is unfair to American cattle producers and misleading for consumers. As I have said before, when you see a 'product of the USA' label on the grocery store shelf, it should mean just that. That is why I introduced bipartisan legislation with Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) to require clear and accurate labeling for beef, and I will continue to stand up for mandatory country of origin labeling and South Dakota cattle producers.

Our nation depends on our farmers and ranchers, and I am profoundly grateful for all of the determined men and women who have chosen this way of life and are committed to helping pass it on to future generations. I am honored to represent South Dakota's farmers and ranchers in the Senate, and I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that they have all the resources they need to continue to feed our nation and the world.



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



Guest Column: Meet the Interns **By Interns Haley, Jack, Margaret, & Quinn**

What some people don't know about the innerworkings of Congress is that a lot of work is done by young, smart individuals—interns. Interns help in Congressman Johnson's Washington, D.C., Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Aberdeen offices. Interns identify bills to cosponsor, write memos on proposed legislation, sit in on meetings, answer constituent phone calls, and compile daily news briefings.

Meet the 4 summer interns for Congressman Dusty Johnson:

Haley grew up in Wagner, South Dakota and is studying Criminal Justice and Political Science at the University of South Dakota (USD). Her favorite part of the internship is talking to constituents to about their concerns and researching bills for potential support.

Jack is a junior at USD studying History and Political Science. After graduation he wants to pursue a career in political analytics.

Margaret is a rising senior at USD, studying Political Science and Opera. While interning in the D.C. office, she has enjoyed working with the communications team and has learned how to invoke positive change in South Dakota.

Quinn, our Ben Reifel fellow, is pursuing a degree in Political Science at the University of Arizona. As a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, she is passionate about Tribal Affairs and enjoys working with our dedicated staff to learn more about the intricacies of Congress.

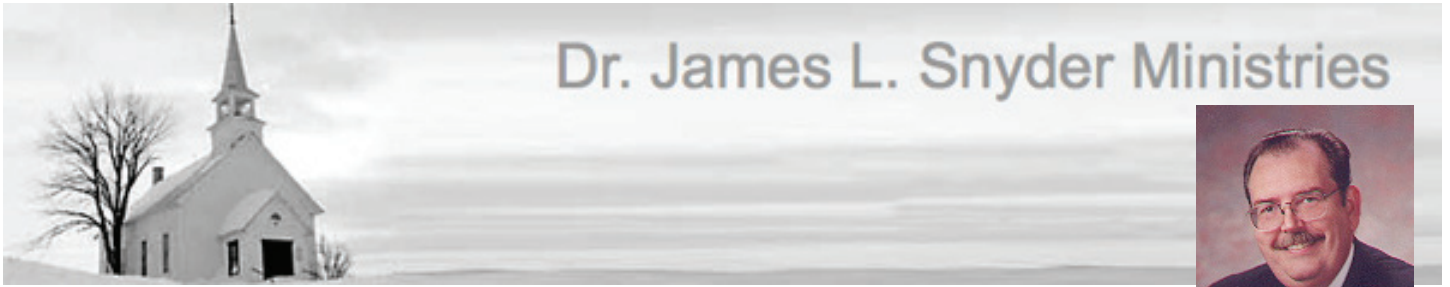
Interning in a congressional office brings a unique experience to students who want to learn and grow before entering the workforce. When asked about her time in the office, Margaret said, "You do work that makes a real difference and learn about areas that interest you. We are surrounded by a team who are leaders in their fields that aid us in becoming a well-rounded young professional."

The Ben Reifel Fellowship is a specialized internship for college students who are interested in federal-tribal relations or Native issues. When asked about her internship, Quinn said, "I get to see things that I learn in my classes happen before my eyes. Being a part of policymaking is truly a one-of-a-kind event that I will remember forever."

Dusty's fall internship is open now, if you or someone you know would like to intern in one of South Dakota's congressional offices, please visit his website to apply.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



It Was One of Those Naughty Flings

Busy weeks seem quite the norm for me. When I think things have slowed down, I turn a corner and things speed up again. So it seems like I never really get a break.

This past week, for instance, was quite busy, and it was even busier because The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was sick and could not go anywhere. Not even shopping!

That was no problem. I just stepped up and took the week as it came.

It was Thursday when things began to catch up with me. By afternoon, I thought I had finished all my tasks and was on my way home. Then, I passed Publix and remembered I was to pick up something for the wife.

I turned around and went back, parked and went into the store. I was dragging my feet a little and thought it would be nice to sit down and relax with a cup of coffee.

Then I remembered this store had free coffee, so I went and got a nice cup of hot coffee. I headed to the pharmaceutical area, where they had a couple of chairs snuggled back in the corner so nobody could see me. I thought it would be a great place to go, take a breath and drink some nice hot coffee.

On my way, I passed the bakery, and lo and behold; there were some fresh Apple Fritters. I have never seen Apple Fritters look so delicious in all my life. But, because of my strict diet, someone in our house has restricted this in my diet.

I looked at them, and I just felt them looking back. I could feel them smiling at me, and I must say, I tried to walk away. I really did try to walk away, but I could not.

Finally, out of desperation, I purchased two Apple Fritters. After all, nobody would know, and I could sit back in the corner and enjoy coffee and Apple Fritters. Who would ever know about this naughty fling of mine?

Then, out of the clear, I heard somebody say, "Hello, Pastor Snyder. I haven't seen you in a while. How are you doing?"

Oh boy, my fling has been unflinged. This woman was one of my wife's friends.

"I hope you're enjoying your Apple Fritters. Tell your wife I said hello."

At the time, I did not know how much trouble I was in. I just may forget she ever told me to say anything to my wife.

"Is that you?" I heard someone else say. "Is that you, Pastor Snyder?"

Once again, someone saw me.

"Haven't seen you for a long time. I hope you're doing well."

I smiled back and said everything was going okay.

She smiled and said, "Enjoy your Apple Fritter; it looks very delicious. By the way, tell your wife I said hello."

Two in a row has to be the limit. So, I sat back in the corner, sipped my coffee and took another bite of that delicious Apple Fritter. I was convinced that my incognito was well guarded at this time.

For my wife's friends to catch me eating an Apple Fritter is quite dangerous.

I finished my Apple Fritters, got up, went out to my vehicle and started on my way home. What a day it turned out to be.

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I went into the house, put the groceries on the table and headed for my easy chair. As I got to my chair, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage stepped in, greeted me and said, "Did you have a good day?"

One thing I know about my life is that she always asks "loaded questions." I never know exactly what is behind any of these questions, so I need to tread very softly.

"Yes, my dear," I said as cheerfully as I could muster at the time. "I think I had a good day even though it was rather busy." So I flashed a smile back at her and thought it was over.

I got situated in my chair, and she came back into my room in a few moments and said, "Did you see any of my friends at Publix today?"

Now I was on edge. No matter what I say at this point, I will be in trouble.

"Yes," I said. Then I mentioned the two women I met at Publix. "They all asked me to tell you they were thinking about you."

"Is that all they asked?"

Being a little nervous, I did not quite understand what was behind that question.

"We just greeted each other, and that was about it."

She then left the room and went back to the kitchen, and I sighed a profound sigh of relief. I honestly believed that I had got away with it.

Then I heard her say, "Both ladies texted me and told me they saw you at Publix."

The way my wife looked at me, I just knew she knew my secret. My problem was, how would she use this secret against me and when?

As I was pondering my current dilemma, I thought of one of my favorite scripture. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

I have faced many situations where I certainly needed God to direct me out of a problem.

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EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Is climate change actually good for the economy, given all the clean-up/restoration jobs severe weather is creating and the employment surges in green energy? – P.B., New Haven, CT

Strangely enough, climate change does produce jobs and boost the economy as we struggle to make ourselves more resilient to its ravages. Some would argue that the renewable energy sector owes much of its success to the climate crisis. According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, renewable energy use has increased by 90 percent since 2000, around when the climate crisis became mainstream.

Now the industry is worth billions of dollars and provides hundreds of thousands of jobs. According to a report by Advanced Energy Now, U.S. clean energy investment increased by 20 percent from 2018 to 2019, reaching a competitive value of \$78.3 billion. Meanwhile, a 2020 report by the National Association of State Energy Officials found that wind and solar energy were responsible for some 544,000 jobs in 2019, whereas the fossil fuel industry was only responsible for 214,000 jobs.

Legislation produced in response to climate change can also boost the economy and provide jobs. In a blog post released by the White House, the federal government outlines the importance of investing in infrastructure associated with transportation and power not only as a means of combating climate change but also to strengthen the economy. Their infrastructure brief released in November 2021 refers to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, legislation that focuses \$1.2 trillion towards infrastructure that improves everything from power grids to public transportation.

There are also those who clean up and restore locations destroyed by natural disasters like hurricanes, which according to the Environmental Defense Fund have increased in frequency by three times since 1900 because of the climate crisis.

However, despite all the economic positives associated with the climate change response, the environmental and public health "risks" still far outweigh the potential economic "benefits." According to a study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Science*, the U.S. gross domestic product, a measure of economic health, will face an annual loss of one-to-two percent, with worst-case scenarios costing as much as 10 percent, if the federal government fails to enact stronger measures to combat climate change. And things aren't looking any better globally: Insurance giant Swiss Re estimates that climate change is on track to reduce global economic output by as much as 14 percent overall by 2050.

The economic costs associated with climate change are so great that even insurance companies, not scientists, are warning people. According to consultants Capgemini and the financial industry body, EFMA, insurance claims from natural disasters have increased by 250 percent over the past 30 years, an increase they believe is due to climate change. Moreover, less than 10 percent of insurers are preparing adequately, meaning the industry will be hit harder if the effects of climate change become more severe.

But the future may not be all doom and gloom. In the same report, Swiss Re states that if we can limit global temperature increases to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, economic losses by 2050 will only reach a maximum of five percent!



While climate change might benefit the economy overall, we would rather not have to deal with it at all. Credit: Pexels.com.

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

1182

Active Cases

3,299
+198

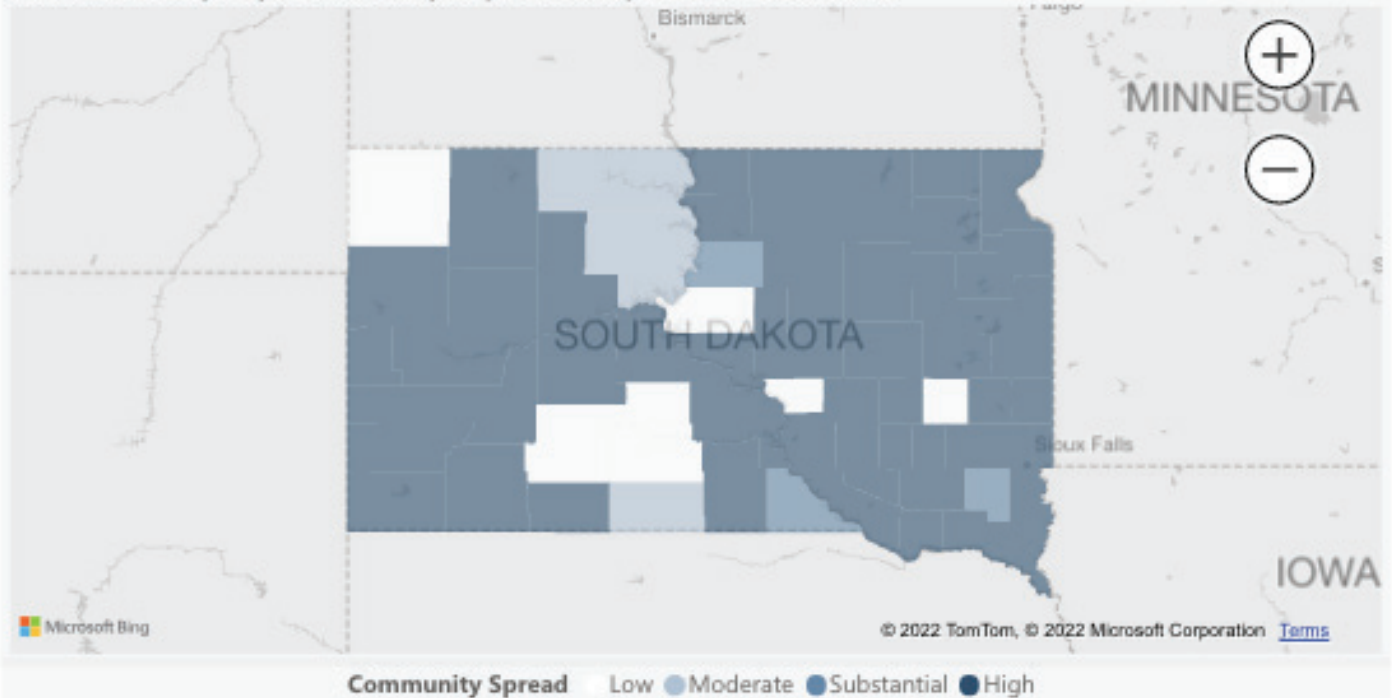
Recovered Cases

239,466

Currently Hospitalized

66

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

245,705

Total Tests

2,234,449

Deaths Among Cases

2,940

Ever Hospitalized

11,076

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

74%

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Brown County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

36

Active Cases

103
+4

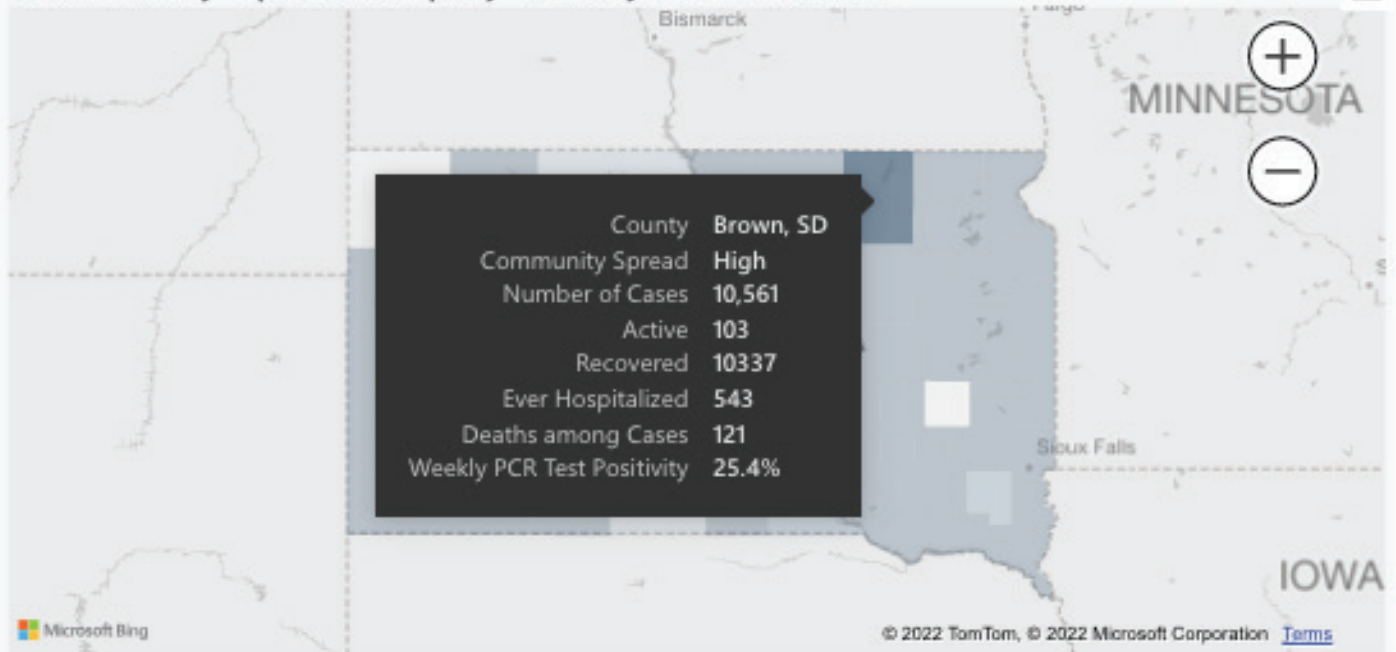
Recovered Cases

10,337

Currently Hospitalized

66

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

10,561

Total Tests

106,549

Deaths Among Cases

121

Ever Hospitalized

543

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

74%

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Day County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

9
-4

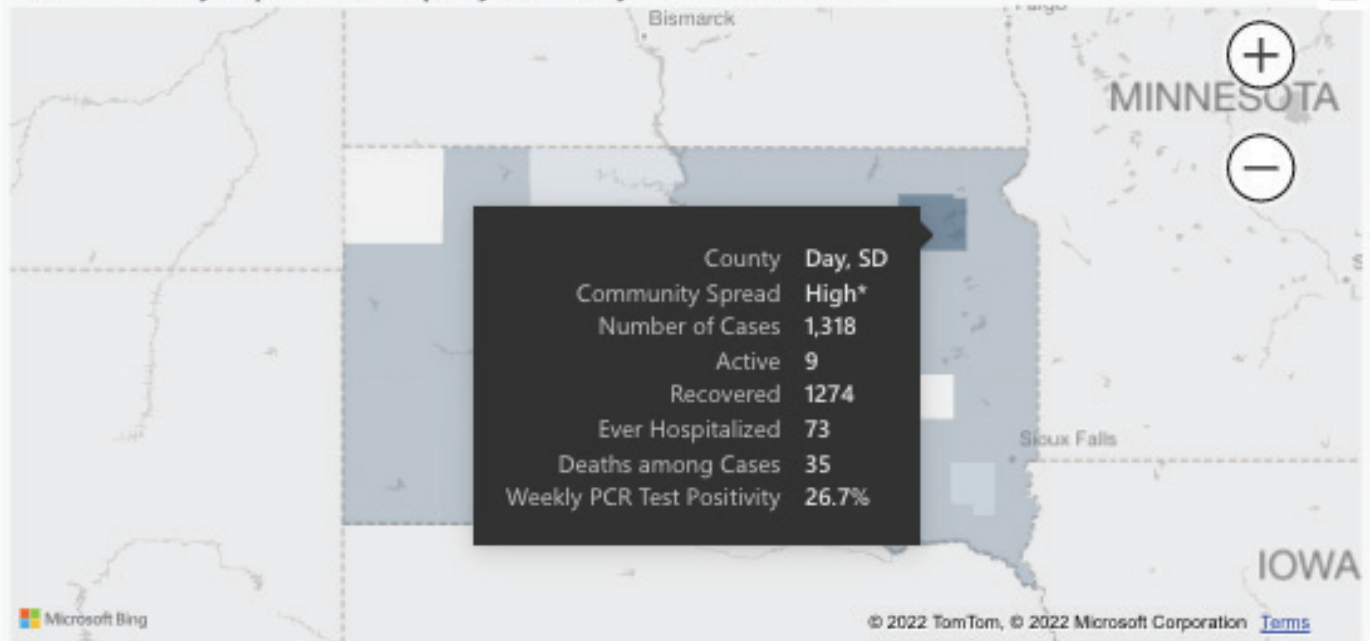
Recovered Cases

1,274

Currently Hospitalized

66

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

1,318

Total Tests

17,259

Deaths Among Cases

35

Ever Hospitalized

73

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

74%

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Ever Hospitalized

11,076

03/07/2020 - 07/04/2022

Currently Hospitalized

66

+13

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases	# of Cases - Last 3 Months
Delta (B.1.617.2 & AY lineages)	1,720	151
Omicron (B.1.1.529 & BA lineages)	1,168	19
Alpha (B.1.1.7)	176	3
Omicron (BA.2)	108	105
Gamma (P.1)	4	1
Beta (B.1.351)	2	2

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Hospitalizations	# of Deaths Among Cases
Male	115,486	5,772	1,606
Female	130,219	5,304	1,334

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Hospitalizations	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	16,450	153	3
10-19 years	29,271	173	2
20-29 years	42,816	592	14
30-39 years	41,445	830	53
40-49 years	34,225	970	88
50-59 years	31,517	1,492	226
60-69 years	26,421	2,243	476
70-79 years	14,210	2,357	689
80+ years	9,350	2,266	1,389

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	# of Hospitalizations	# of Deaths
Asian / Pacific Islander	3,402	110	20
Black	6,034	208	22
Hispanic	10,514	354	39
Native American	30,940	1,918	445
Other	2,057	59	13
Unknown	4,889	71	18
White	187,869	8,356	2,383

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COVID-19 Update by Marie Miller

We haven't looked at a heat map for a while, so today looked like a good day for that. There's been a great deal of movement, but not much change since our last analysis. What I mean by that is, while many states shifted categories, the net change was almost nil. That's sort of depressing: We're sitting in a holding pattern at an enormous new-case rate, and we're not getting safer really with time.

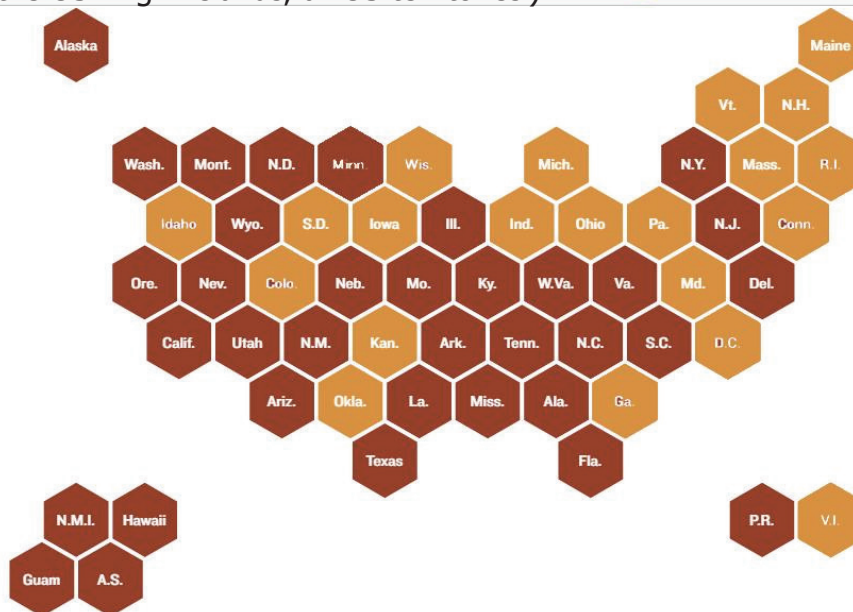
A lot of people are reporting to me that they have friends and/or family getting sick on all sides, more than ever before; and my own experience echoes that. Of course, experience isn't data, but it turns out the data are telling us you probably have friends and/or family getting sick on all sides, so it turns out your experience is pretty on-target this time. And some folks I know haven't just had a little cold-like thing; they've been pretty damned sick, so there's that too. Sigh.

Here are the details: The Northern Marianas and American Samoa jumped all the way from yellow to red. Additionally, North Dakota, Nebraska, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina all moved from orange to red. Moving down from red to orange were Colorado, Wisconsin, Michigan, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands. Essentially, this was just a lot of trading places.

Last time we did this, we had 35 states and territories in red, 19 in orange, and 2 in yellow; now we have 35 in red and 21 in orange. Sadly, no one's in yellow or green. Doesn't look like anyone's going to be anytime soon either; there's still a lot of upward movement with 17 states and territories still increasing, around 19 pretty flat, and 10 decreasing, but not fast enough to change categories very soon. The overall pattern has been shift of high-case numbers southward and westward from the Northeast. Some places are in real trouble: the Northern Marianas show a two-week increase in new cases of 132%; Minnesota has 97%; Oklahoma and Arkansas are in the 50s; and Texas, Indiana, and Connecticut are in the 40s. Only moves I foresee in the next week or two would be that Indiana, Connecticut, and Georgia might move from orange to red. No one's looking to move down.

I would hate to see us stagnate at such a high level of community transmission for the summer because we know, absent miracles both in vaccine development and vaccine acceptance, we're going to see a surge in the fall; I don't like surges that start this high. Looks as though in our third year we haven't learned much yet.

The original template for this heat map is from NPR; I have modified it to show changes since NPR's last update. Red designates "unchecked spread," orange is "escalating spread," yellow is "potential spread," and green is "close to containment." (For the record, NMI is the Northern Mariana Islands, AS is American Samoa, and VI is the US Virgin Islands, all US territories.)



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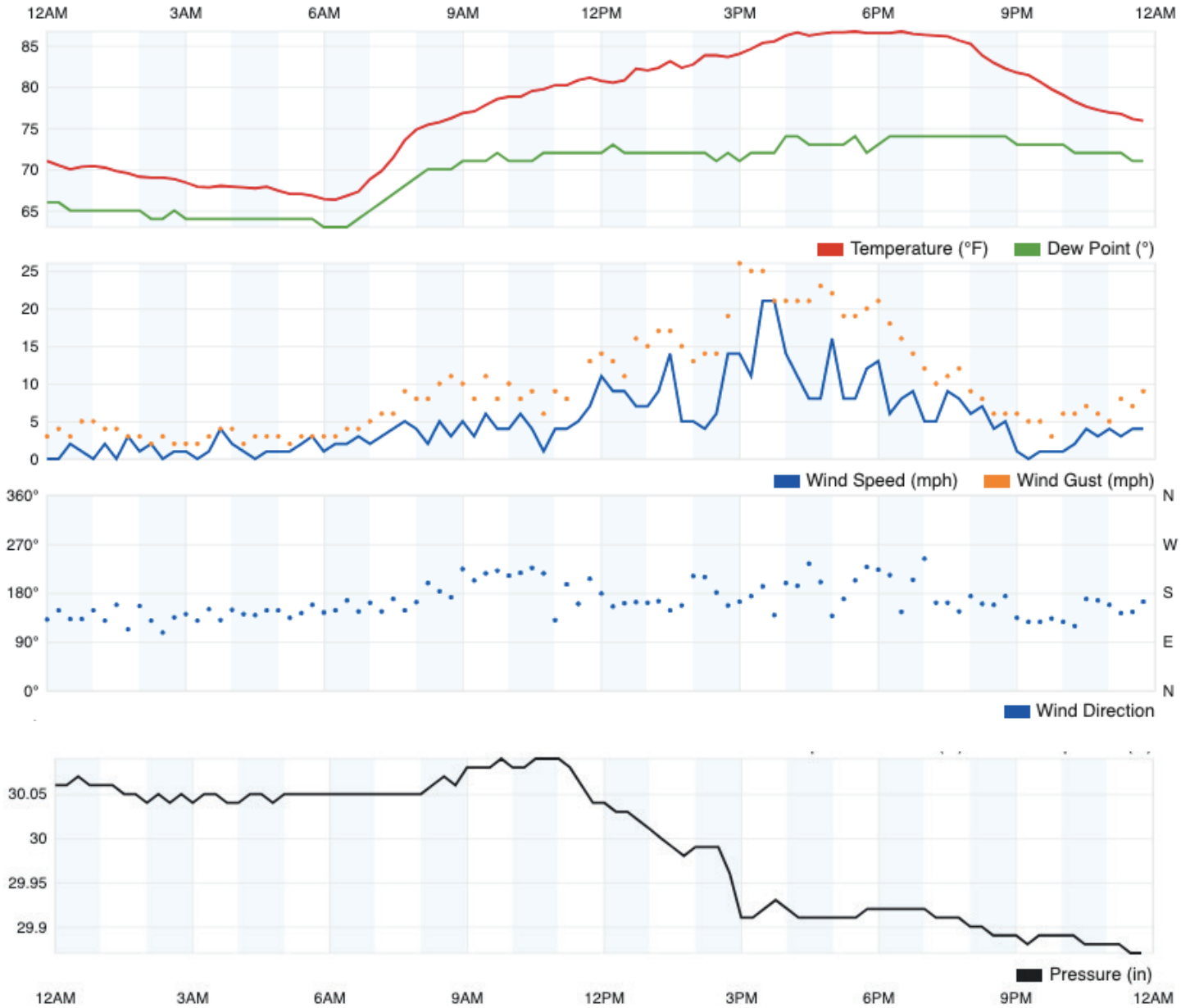


A few colorful clouds early Sunday morning. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent


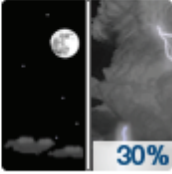



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
Slight Chance T-storms then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms then Sunny and Breezy	Clear	Sunny
High: 93 °F	Low: 67 °F	High: 83 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 86 °F



Severe Risk Today and Tonight

July 10, 2022
4:17 AM

Main Threats are Hail and Damaging Winds

This Morning

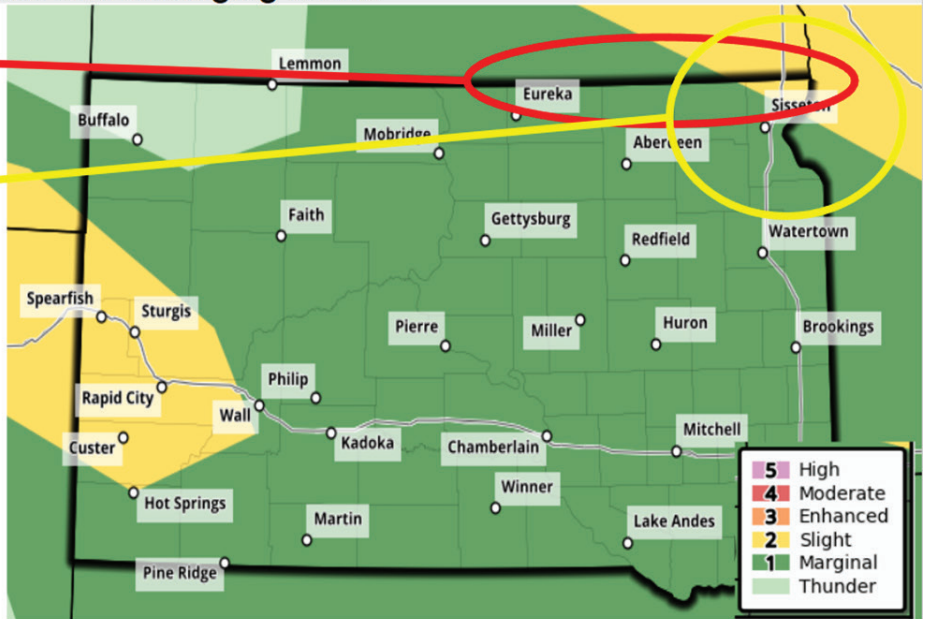
- Any storm should dissipate rapidly.

This Afternoon

- Isolated storm along front. Cannot rule out an isolated/brief tornado before storms move into MN.

Late Evening west river Early Monday east river

- Broad area of convection statewide moves west to east overnight.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A couple of areas to watch today and tonight. Best chance for moisture and potential severe weather is tonight with storms moving rapidly west to east across the state.

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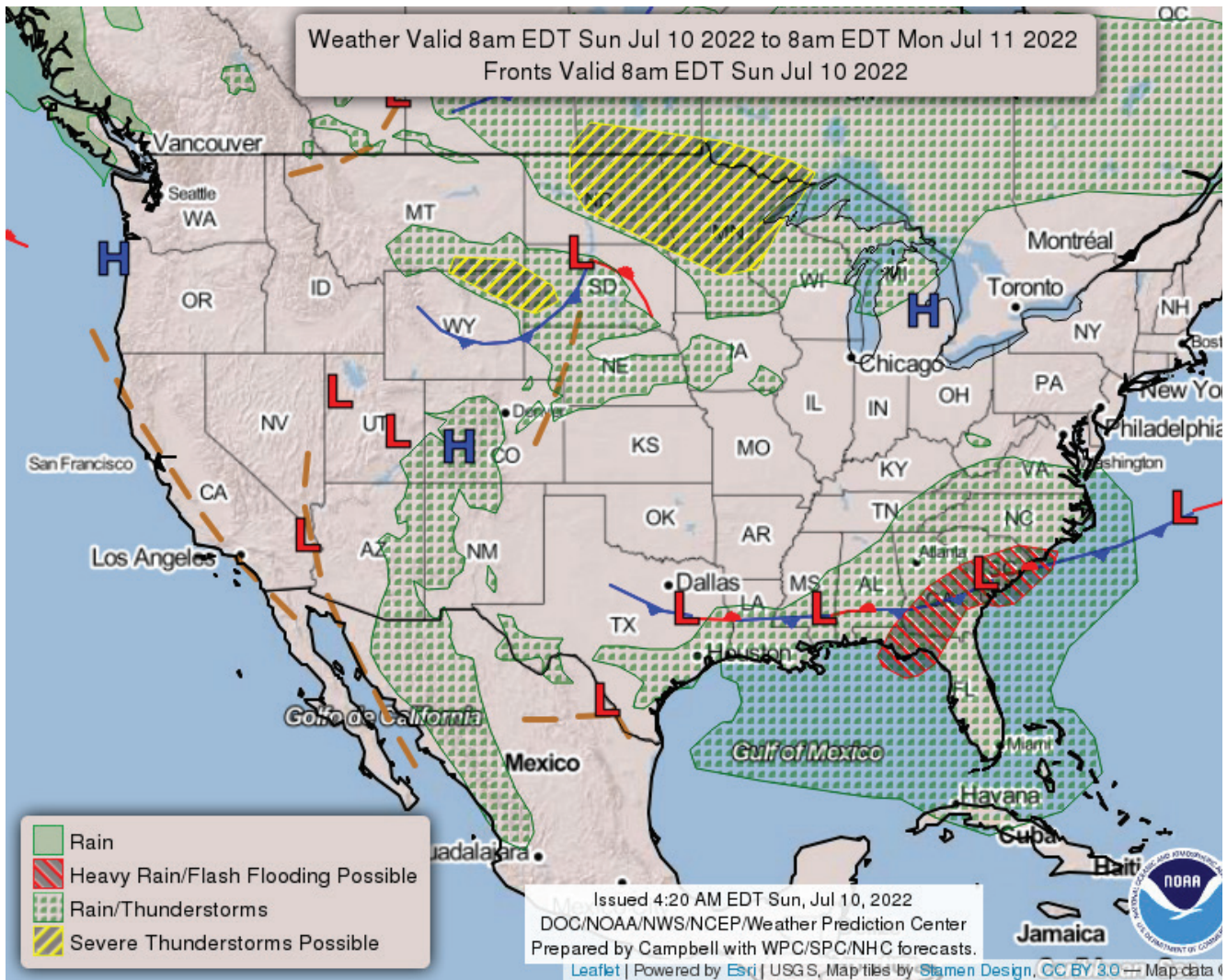
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 5:10 PM
Low Temp: 66 °F at 6:06 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 2:58 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 30 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 114 in 1936
Record Low: 42 in 1945
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.15
Precip to date in July.: 2.21
Average Precip to date: 12.16
Precip Year to Date: 13.79
Sunset Tonight: 9:23:02 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:22:28 PM



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Today in Weather History

July 10, 1998: Flash flooding occurred from Keldron, in Corson County, and areas south, during the late afternoon and evening as a result of up to seven inches of rain that had fallen from slow-moving thunderstorms. Willow Creek and several small tributaries went out of their banks causing the inundation of low areas and county roads. Many county roads were damaged with one farmer losing several pigs and cows as a result of the flooding.

1887: A dam breaks in Zug, Switzerland, killing 70 people in their homes and destroying a large section of the town.

1911: The mercury hit 105 degrees at North Bridgton, Maine the hottest reading of record for Maine. North Bridgton also reached 105 degrees on the 4th of July in 1911.

1913: The mercury hit 134 degrees at Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, California, the hottest reading of record for the World. Sandstorm conditions accompanied the heat.

1926: At the Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, lightning struck one of the explosives storage structures during a thunderstorm and started a fire. As a result, several million pounds of explosives detonated over a period of 2–3 days. This explosion not only structural devastation, 187 of 200 buildings destroyed but military and civilian casualties as well. Close to one hundred are injured as explosion spreads havoc within a radius of 15 miles in New Jersey. Otto Dowling was in charge at the time and received a Distinguished Service Cross for his handling of the situation.

1936 - Afternoon highs of 112 degrees at Martinsburg, WV, 109 degrees at Cumberland, MD, and Frederick, MD, 110 degrees at Runyon, NJ, and 111 degrees at Phoenixville, PA, established all-time record highs for those four states. It was the hottest day of record for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. (The Weather Channel)

1979 - The temperature at El Paso, TX, hit 112 degrees, an all-time record for that location. The next day was 110 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature in downtown Kansas City, MO, hit 109 degrees, following a sultry overnight low of 89 degrees. The daily low of 89 degrees was the warmest of record for Kansas City, and overall it was the hottest July day of record. It was the seventh of a record seventeen consecutive days of 100 degree heat, and the mean temperature for the month of 90.2 degrees was also an all-time record for Kansas City.

1987 - An early morning thunderstorm in Minnesota produced wind gusts to 91 mph at Waseca. Later that day, thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 81 mph at Ipswitch, and baseball size hail near Hayes and Capa. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms brought welcome rains to parts of the central U.S., but produced severe weather along the New England coast, in the Great Lakes Region, in North Carolina, and in the Southern Plateau Region. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting to 80 mph at Bullfrog, UT, sank three boats on Lake Powell. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Severe thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes in the northeastern U.S. A powerful (F-4) tornado struck Hamden CT and New Haven, CT, causing 100 million dollars damage at Hamden, and another 20 million dollars damage around New Haven. Forty persons were injured in the tornado. Seventy persons were injured in a tornado which traveled from Watertown, CT, to Waterbury, CT, and another powerful (F-4) tornado touched down near Ames NY injuring twenty persons along its 43.5 mile track. It was the strongest tornado of record for eastern New York State. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - Hurricane Dennis landed near Pensacola, Florida as a category 3 storm. Maximum sustained winds at the time of landfall were near 120 mph. There were nine hurricane-related fatalities in the U.S. and preliminary estimates of insured losses ranged from \$1 to \$1.5 billion.

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Finally Free

A clerk in Birmingham, England was placing a package on a shelf in a post office. As he was lifting it from a cart, it broke open and out fell what appeared to be a pair of "heavy-duty" handcuffs that were unlocked.

Jokingly, he said to an associate, "I dare you to try these on for size."

"I'll take the dare," he said, put them on and locked them. After a few laughs, they went to the box to locate the key to unlock them. To their surprise, there was no key.

They hurried to the police station to get a key to release the lock. They inserted it properly, but when they turned the key, it broke. What was once comical now became serious. The broken key either had to be drilled from the cuffs or the thick, heavy handcuffs sawed apart.

But it was Sunday, and no one could be found to help them out of their predicament. Finally, they went to the police chief who said, "Well, this looks like a good time to teach you a lesson. You'll have to go to Derby, explain your problem to the person who made the handcuffs and then come back, and we'll remove them. You need to learn a lesson about playing with things that can harm you."

What a picture of sin. At first, it promises to bring pleasure and enjoyment - a time of fun and laughter. Then, it takes one "captive," and one is no longer free. But we know there is one who can free us: Christ our Savior. "The Lord sets prisoners free," proclaimed the Psalmist.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to accept the freedom that can be ours through Your Son. May we place our trust in You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord sets prisoners free. Psalm 146:7c

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2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
06/20/2022 Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
06/25/2022 How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start
(4th of July)
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/20/2022 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022 Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022 Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

06-23-27-28-33

(six, twenty-three, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$107,000

Lotto America

06-11-26-32-35, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 3

(six, eleven, twenty-six, thirty-two, thirty-five; Star Ball: ten; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$16,910,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 440,000,000

Powerball

14-22-42-46-52, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 3

(fourteen, twenty-two, forty-two, forty-six, fifty-two; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$56,000,000

Sri Lanka opposition meets to install new gov't amid turmoil

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's opposition political parties were meeting Sunday to agree on a new government a day after the country's president and prime minister offered to resign in the most dramatic day of monthslong political turmoil, with protesters storming both leaders' homes and setting fire to one of the buildings in a rage over the economic crisis.

Protesters remained in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's home, his seaside office and the prime minister's residence, saying they will stay until they officially resign. Soldiers were deployed around the city and Chief of Defense Staff Shavendra Silva called for public support to maintain law and order.

Ranjith Madduma Bandara, a top official in main opposition party United People's Force, said that separate discussions were held with other parties and lawmakers who broke away from Rajapaksa's ruling coalition and more meetings are planned. He did not say when an agreement might be reached, even though it was expected to be finalized on Sunday.

Another opposition lawmaker, M. A. Sumanthiran, said earlier that all opposition parties combined could easily muster the 113 members needed to show a majority in Parliament, at which point they will request Rajapaksa to install the new government and then resign.

Rajapaksa appeared to have vacated his residence before it was stormed, and government spokesperson Mohan Samaranayake said he had no information about his movements. A statement from the president's office Sunday said that Rajapaksa ordered officials to start immediate distribution of a cooking gas consignment, suggested that he was still at work.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he will leave office once a new government is in place, and hours later the speaker of Parliament said Rajapaksa would step down Wednesday. Pressure on both men had grown as the economic meltdown set off acute shortages of essential items, leaving people struggling to obtain food, fuel and other necessities.

If both president and prime minister resign, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena will take over as temporary president, according to the constitution.

Rajapaksa appointed Wickremesinghe as prime minister in May in an effort to solve the shortages and start economic recovery.

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Wickremesinghe had been part of crucial talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout program and with the World Food Program to prepare for a predicted food crisis. The government must submit a plan on debt sustainability to the IMF in August before reaching an agreement.

Analysts say it is doubtful any new leader could do more than Wickremesinghe. His government's efforts showed promise, with much-needed fertilizer being distributed to farmers for next season's cultivation and a first consignment of cooking gas orders arriving in the country Sunday.

"This kind of unrest could create confusion among international organizations like the IMF and the World Bank," political analyst Ranga Kalansooriya said, adding that a new administration should agree on a common program for economic recovery.

He said while Wickremesinghe was working in the right direction, his administration's weakness was not implementing a long-term plan to go with its focus on solving day-to-day problems.

It is unlikely that an all-party government will agree on IMF-backed economic reforms without some parties losing their political support.

Wickremesinghe said Saturday that it was not proper for him to leave without a government in place.

"Today in this country we have a fuel crisis, a food shortage, we have the head of the World Food Program coming here and we have several matters to discuss with the IMF," Wickremesinghe said. "Therefore, if this government leaves there should be another government."

Thousands of protesters entered the capital Colombo on Saturday and swarmed into Rajapaksa's fortified residence. Crowds of people splashed in the garden pool, lounged on beds and used their cellphone cameras to capture the moment. Some made tea or used the gym while others issued statements from a conference room demanding that the president and prime minister go.

Even though both Wickremesinghe and Abeywardena, the parliament speaker, said in their speeches that they had spoken with the president, they did not say anything about his whereabouts.

Protesters later broke into the prime minister's private residence and set it on fire, Wickremesinghe's office said. It wasn't clear if he was there when the incursion happened.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Washington was tracking the developments in Sri Lanka and urged Parliament to work quickly to implement solutions and address people's discontent.

Speaking at a news conference in Bangkok, Blinken said that the United States condemns attacks against the peaceful demonstrators while calling for a full investigation into any protest-related violence.

Sri Lanka is relying on aid from India and other nations as leaders try to negotiate a bailout with the IMF. Wickremesinghe said recently that negotiations with the IMF were complex because Sri Lanka was now a bankrupt state.

Sri Lanka announced in April that it was suspending repayment of foreign loans due to a foreign currency shortage. Its total foreign debt amounts to \$51 billion, of which it must repay \$28 billion by the end of 2027.

Months of demonstrations have all but dismantled the Rajapaksa political dynasty, which has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades but is accused by protesters of mismanagement and corruption. The president's older brother resigned as prime minister in May after violent protests saw him seek safety at a naval base. He later moved into a house in Colombo.

President and PM: 2 men at heart of Sri Lankan crisis

By KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — As Sri Lanka's crisis reached its climax this weekend, two men in the center of the turmoil brought about by the country's economic collapse promised they would heed the call of tens of thousands of angry protesters and resign.

One is President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the last of six members of the country's most influential family who was still clinging to power.

The other is Rajapaksa's chosen prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, a seasoned opposition politician who was brought in to steer the country out of the abyss.

On Saturday, massive crowds descended on the capital, Colombo, broke into Rajapaksa's official resi-

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dence and occupied his seaside office. Hours later, as leaders of political parties in Parliament called for both leaders to step down, protesters also stormed Wickremesinghe's residence and set it on fire.

The culmination of monthslong protests on Saturday led to both of them agreeing to step down. Rajapaksa, whose whereabouts are unknown, said he would leave office on Wednesday, according to the parliamentary speaker. Wickremesinghe said he would depart as soon as opposition parties agree on a unity government.

Here is a closer look at their rise and fall:

GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA

For decades, the powerful land-owning Rajapaksa family had dominated local politics in their rural southern district before Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected president in 2005. Appealing to the nationalist sentiment of the island's Buddhist-Sinhalese majority, he led Sri Lanka into a triumphant victory over ethnic Tamil rebels in 2009, ending a 26-year brutal civil war that had divided the country. His younger brother, Gotabaya, was a powerful official and military strategist in the Ministry of Defense.

Mahinda remained in office until 2015, when he lost to the opposition led by his former aide. But the family made a comeback in 2019, when Gotabaya won the presidential election on a promise to restore security in the wake of the Easter Sunday terrorist suicide bombings that killed 290 people.

He vowed to bring back the muscular nationalism that had made his family popular with the Buddhist majority, and to lead the country out of an economic slump with a message of stability and development.

Instead, he made a series of fatal mistakes that ushered in an unprecedented crisis.

As tourism plunged in the wake of the bombings and foreign loans on controversial development projects — including a port and an airport in the president's home region — needed to be repaid, Rajapaksa disobeyed economic advisers and pushed through with the largest tax cuts in the country's history. It was meant to spur spending, but critics warned it would slash the government's finances. Pandemic lockdowns and an ill-advised ban on chemical fertilizers further hurt the fragile economy.

The country soon ran out of money and couldn't repay its huge debts. Shortages of food, cooking gas, fuel and medicine stocked public anger at what many saw as mismanagement, corruption and nepotism.

The family's unravelling began in April, when growing protests forced three Rajapaksa relatives, including the finance minister, to quit their Cabinet posts and another to leave his ministerial job. In May, government supporters attacked protesters in a wave of violence that left nine dead. The anger of the protesters turned to Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was pressured to resign as prime minister and took refuge on a heavily fortified naval base.

But Gotabaya refused to go, triggering chants in the streets of "Gota Go Home!" Instead, he saw his savior in Ranil Wickremesinghe.

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE

A six-time prime minister, Wickremesinghe's latest stint was arguably the most challenging. Appointed in May by Rajapaksa, he was brought in to help restore international credibility as his government negotiated a bailout package with the International Monetary Fund.

Wickremesinghe, who also was the finance minister, became the public face of the crisis, delivering weekly addresses in Parliament as he kicked off difficult negotiations with financial institutions, lenders and allies to fill the coffers and give some relief to impatient citizens.

He raised taxes and pledged to overhaul a government that had increasingly concentrated power under the presidency, a model many say tipped the country into crisis.

In his new job, he left little doubt about the grave future ahead. "The next couple of months will be the most difficult ones of our lives," he told Sri Lankans in early June, a few weeks before he said in Parliament that the country had hit rock bottom. "Our economy has completely collapsed," he said.

Ultimately, observers say, he lacked both political heft and public support to get the job done. He was a one-man party in Parliament - the only lawmaker from his party to hold a seat after it suffered a humiliating defeat in a 2020 election.

His reputation had already been sullied by his previous stint as prime minister, when he was in a difficult

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power-sharing arrangement with then-President Maithripala Sirisena. A communication breakdown between them was blamed for intelligence lapses that led to the 2019 terror attack.

With no respite for people waiting in line for fuel, food and medicine, Wickremesinghe became increasingly unpopular. Many of the protesters say his appointment simply put off pressure on Rajapaksa to resign. But analysts are doubtful whether a new leader can do much more, instead fearing that the political uncertainty will only intensify the crisis.

Ukraine: 15 dead in rocket attack on apartment building

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — At least 15 people were killed when a Russian rocket hit an apartment building in the eastern Ukraine town of Chasiv Yar and more than 20 people may still be trapped in the rubble, officials said Sunday.

The Saturday night rocket assault is the latest in a recent burst of high-casualty attacks on civilian structures. At least 19 people died when a Russian missile hit a shopping mall in the city of Kremenchuk in late June and 21 people were killed when an apartment building and recreation area came under rocket fire in the southern Odesa region this month.

Russia has repeatedly claimed that it is hitting only targets of military value in the war. There was no comment on Chasiv Yar at a Russian Defense Ministry briefing on Sunday.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, governor of the Donetsk region that includes Chasiv Yar, said the town of about 12,000 was hit by Uragan rockets, which are fired from truck-borne systems.

The Ukrainian emergency services later said the death toll had risen to 15 and that an estimated two dozen people were under the wreckage. Rescuers made voice contact with at least three people trapped in the rubble, it said.

Chasiv Yar is about 20 kilometers (12 miles) southeast of Kramatorsk, a city that is expected to be a major target of Russian forces as they grind westward.

The Donetsk region is one of two provinces along with Luhansk that make up the Donbas region, where separatist rebels have fought Ukrainian forces since 2014. Last week, Russia captured the city of Lysychansk, the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in Luhansk.

Russian forces are raising "true hell" in the Donbas, despite assessments they were taking an operational pause, Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said Saturday.

After the seizure of Lysychansk, some analysts predicted Moscow's troops likely would take some time to rearm and regroup.

But "so far there has been no operational pause announced by the enemy. He is still attacking and shelling our lands with the same intensity as before," Haidai said. He later said the Russian bombardment of Luhansk was suspended because Ukrainian forces had destroyed ammunition depots and barracks used by the Russians.

South Africa police say 15 killed in bar shooting in Soweto

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — A mass shooting at a tavern in Johannesburg's Soweto township has killed 15 people and left others in critical condition, according to police.

Police say they are investigating reports that a group of men arrived in a minibus taxi and opened fire on some of the patrons at the bar shortly after midnight Sunday.

Those injured have been taken to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

The number of cartridges found on the scene indicates that a group of people opened fire in the bar, said Gauteng province police commissioner Lt. Gen. Elias Mawela.

"The primary investigation suggests that these people were enjoying themselves here, in a licensed tavern operating within the right hours," Mawela told The Associated Press.

"All of a sudden they heard some gunshots, that is when people tried to run out of the tavern. We don't have the full details at the moment of what is the motive, and why they were targeting these people," he

said.

"You can see that a high caliber firearm was used and it was shooting randomly. You can see that every one of those people were struggling to get out of the tavern," Mawela told The Associated Press.

The area where the shooting took place was very dark, making it harder to find people who could identify the suspects, he said.

Rifles and a 9 mm pistol were used in the attack, said national police spokeswoman Col. Dimakatso Sello.

In a separate incident, four people were shot dead by unknown gunmen at a tavern in Sweetwaters township in the coastal city of Pietermaritzburg on Saturday night.

According to the police, two men entered the tavern and randomly opened fire on the patrons, killing two people on the scene while two others were confirmed dead at the hospital. Police said 8 other people are receiving treatment in a hospital. The deceased were aged between 30 and 45 and police are investigating charges of murder and attempted murder, police said.

"The team will be working around the clock to track down and bring to book those responsible for this shooting", said Kwazulu-Natal police commissioner Gen. Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi.

The bar shootings come two weeks after 21 teenagers were found dead in a tavern in the city of East London. The cause of those deaths has not yet been announced by authorities, but the teens were not shot nor crushed in a stampede, according to officials.

Ukraine Muslims pray for victory, end of occupation

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

KOSTIANTYNIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — By the time the Russians invaded, 43-year-old Mufti Said Ismahilov — one of the Muslim spiritual leaders of Ukraine — had already resolved that he would step aside from his religious duties to fight for his country.

At the end of last year, as warnings of an imminent attack grew louder, Ismahilov began training with a local territorial defense battalion. By then he had served as a mufti for thirteen years.

Born and raised in Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, Ismahilov had already fled Russia once before, in 2014, when Moscow-backed separatists captured his city. He eventually moved to a quiet suburb outside Kyiv called Bucha — only to find himself, eight years later, at the heart of Moscow's assault on Kyiv, and the site of atrocities that shocked the world. It felt as if the threat of Russian occupation would never end.

"This time I made the decision that I would not run away, I would not flee but I would fight" he said in an interview with The Associated Press in Kostiantynivka, a town close to the front lines in eastern Ukraine where a battle for control of the region is intensifying.

Ismahilov began working as a military driver for paramedics evacuating the wounded from front lines or besieged towns. Tasked with driving in highly dangerous conditions, but also emotionally supporting the critically injured, Ismahilov says he sees his new job as "a continuation of my spiritual duty before God."

"If you are not scared and you can do this, then it is very important. The Prophet was himself a warrior," Ismahilov says. "So I follow his example and I also will not run, or hide. I will not turn my back on others."

Ismahilov was one of dozens of Ukrainian Muslims who gathered at the mosque in Kostiantynivka Saturday to mark Eid al-Adha — an important religious holiday in Islam. The mosque is now the last remaining operational mosque in Ukrainian-controlled territory in Donbas. Ismahilov told the AP that there are around 30 mosques in the region in total but that most are now in the hands of the Russians.

Last week, Russia captured the city of Lysychansk, the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in the eastern province of Luhansk. The governor of the Luhansk region said on Saturday that Russian forces are now pressing toward the border with the neighbouring Donetsk region.

Muslims make up almost 1 percent of the population in Ukraine, which is predominantly Orthodox Christian. There is a large Muslim population in Crimea — home to the Crimean Tatars and illegally annexed by Russian in 2014. Numbers there jump to 12%. There is also a sizeable Muslim community in eastern Ukraine, the result of waves of economic migration as the region industrialised and many Muslims immigrated to the Donbas region to work in the mines and factories.

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The conflict in 2014 forced many Muslims from Crimea and Donbas to relocate to other parts of the country where they joined long-established Tatar communities or built new Islamic centers alongside Turks, Arabs and Ukrainian converts.

But the invasion has forced many to flee once again. The mosque in Kostiantynivka used to cater for a local Muslim population of several hundred people. On Saturday, few local residents were present, having journeyed west with their families. Instead the congregation was made up of soldiers or combat medics from different units: Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian converts from Kharkiv, Kyiv and western Ukraine.

In his sermon following the traditional Eid prayers, Ismahilov told the congregation that this year's Eid had a symbolic significance in the midst of the war, and asked them to remember Muslims living in occupied territories, where many have lost their homes and several mosques have been destroyed by shelling. Referencing a series of arrests of Crimean Tartars in the wake of the 2014 annexation, Ismahilov said Muslims in occupied territories do not feel safe.

"There is a lot of fear. ... The war continues and we have no idea what is happening in the occupied territories and what situation Muslims are in there" he said.

Ismahilov told the AP that he considers Russian Muslims invading Ukraine, including Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov's infamous Chechen battalions, as "criminals".

"They are committing sins and ... they have come as murderers and occupiers, on a territory that is the home of Ukrainians and Ukrainian Muslims, without any justification. Allah did not give them that right" says Ismahilov. "They will answer for all this before God."

Olha Bashei, 45, a lawyer turned paramedic from Kyiv who converted to Islam in 2015, says Russia is trying "erase Ukraine from the face of the earth." Bashei began working as a frontline paramedic in Donbas in 2014. She considers this war her 'jihad', a term to denote a holy war or personal struggle in Islam.

"This war is my war, and I defend my jihad because I have nephews, I have a mother and I defend my home. I do not want my nephews to ever see what I, unfortunately, saw in this war" she said.

"Islam even helps me because in Islam, in prayer, you somehow distract yourself from the war because you read the prayer and you have a connection with the Almighty. For me, Islam is a force that supports me even in war."

As the soldiers prepared the customary sacrificial sheep for the Eid feast, a residential area in Kostiantynivka several kilometers away came under violent shelling. The incoming artillery shook the ground. Some soldiers ran to the mosque's bunker. Others shrugged it off and continued to drink their tea and eat dates. The shelling caused several fires, injuring several inhabitants and burning roofs to cinders.

Ismahilov said they would pray for victory and the liberation of the occupied territories.

"We pray that our Muslim compatriots will be safe, that our families will be reunited, that the slain Muslims will go to heaven, and that all the Muslim soldiers who are defending their country will be accepted as shahids (martyrs) by Allah."

Iran enriches to 20% with new centrifuges at fortified site

By NASSER KARIMI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran announced Sunday that it has begun enriching uranium up to 20% using sophisticated centrifuges at its underground Fordo nuclear plant, state TV reported, an escalation that comes amid a standoff with the West over its tattered atomic deal.

That Tehran is enriching uranium up to 20% purity — a technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90% — with a new set of its most advanced centrifuges at a facility deep inside a mountain deals yet another blow to the already slim chances of reviving the accord.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, a spokesman for Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said uranium enriched to 20% was collected for the first time from advanced IR-6 centrifuges on Saturday. He said Iran had informed the U.N. nuclear watchdog about the development two weeks ago.

Centrifuges are used to spin enriched uranium into higher levels of purity. Tehran's 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers had called for Fordo to become a research-and-development facility and restricted

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centrifuges there to non-nuclear uses.

Iran had previously told the IAEA that it was preparing to enrich uranium through a new cascade of 166 advanced IR-6 centrifuges at its underground Fordo facility. But it hadn't revealed the level at which the cascade would be enriching.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, told The Associated Press that it had verified on Saturday that Iran was using a set-up that allowed it to more swiftly and easily switch between enrichment levels.

In a report to member states, Director General Rafael Grossi described a system of "modified sub-headers," which he said allowed Iran to inject gas enriched up to 5% purity into a cascade of 166 IR-6 centrifuges for the purpose of producing uranium enriched up to 20% purity.

Iran did not comment on the latest IAEA finding.

Nuclear talks have been at a standstill for months. The U.S. special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, described the latest round of negotiations in Qatar as "more than a little bit of a wasted occasion."

The IAEA reported last month that Iran has 43 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60% purity — a short step to 90%. Nonproliferation experts warn that's enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon if Iran chose to pursue it.

However, Iran still would need to design a bomb and a delivery system for it, likely a monthslong project.

Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, though U.N. experts and Western intelligence agencies say Iran had an organized military nuclear program through 2003.

Tehran's escalating nuclear work has raised alarm with transparency rapidly diminishing. Last month Iran shut off more than two dozen IAEA monitoring cameras from various nuclear-related sites across the country.

Former President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crushing sanctions on Tehran, setting off a series of tense incidents across the wider Mideast. Iran responded by massively increasing its nuclear work, growing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and spinning advanced centrifuges banned by the accord.

Iran's adversary Israel has long opposed the nuclear accord, saying it delayed rather ended Iran's nuclear progress and arguing that sanctions relief empowered Tehran's proxy militias across the region.

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid called on the U.N. to re-impose multilateral sanctions on Iran — a bid that was met with stiff opposition when pushed by the Trump administration.

"The response of the international community must be decisive: to return to the U.N. Security Council and activate the sanctions mechanism at full force," Lapid, who is serving as caretaker leader, told his Cabinet. "Israel, for its part, maintains full freedom to act, diplomatically and operationally, in this fight against Iran's nuclear program."

Balkan activists keep fighting for Europe's last wild rivers

by SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — It took a decade of court battles and street protests, but Balkan activists fighting to protect some of Europe's last wild rivers have scored an important conservation victory in Bosnia.

A new electricity law, which passed Thursday, bans the further construction of small hydroelectric power plants in the larger of Bosnia's two semi-independent entities. Still, the new law only highlights the long road ahead to protect such rivers across the entire Balkans from being degraded, diverted and commercialized by people with connections to the region's corruption-prone political elite.

"This is extraordinary. It will become the role model for other European countries, I am sure," said Ulrich Eichelmann of the Vienna-based conservation group River Watch and coordinator of the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign to protect the entire network of wild Balkan rivers.

Since it was launched in 2013, the campaign has brought together environmental activists, conservation groups and local people to jointly fight for protection of what it calls "one of the most important spots

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for European biodiversity." It says the Balkans has over 28,000 kilometers (17,400 miles) of waterways in pristine or near-natural state, with "extensive gravel banks, untouched alluvial forests, deep gorges, spectacular waterfalls and even karstic underground rivers."

Overall, more than 2,700 large and small hydropower plants are projected to be built on these Balkan rivers, including some inside national parks.

Bosnia alone has 244 rivers and had plans to build over 350 hydropower plants with the installed capacity of up to 10 mW — or more than one on every waterway.

"This whole business with small hydropower plants began some 15 years ago when investors started visiting villages and promising prosperity to the local people," explained Lejla Kusturica, a prominent Bosnian river conservation activist.

In their telling, she added, "rivers were supposed to be prettified, we were supposed to generate significant quantities of clean electricity and local communities were promised it will all benefit them greatly."

Instead, Kusturica said, investors begun trapping rivers and diverting them by pipe, taking away water used daily by locals and wildlife, eroding and degrading nearby forests.

Undeterred, the authorities offered investors public subsidies and fixed above-market prices for long-term contracts, arguing that this would help Bosnia reduce its dependence on coal and speed up its transition to renewable energy.

But following a construction boom that saw 110 small hydropower plants built in Bosnia, people from across the ethnically divided country begun arguing that these projects were in fact harmful for both the environment and their livelihoods.

Residents of Bosnia's riverside villages and towns spontaneously started mobilizing against the small hydroelectric plants, documenting their destruction of nature, analyzing official statistics on their alleged economic contributions and launching court challenges against the permits authorities continued to issue for new projects.

The resistance included peaceful, at times months-long, sit-in protests on roads and bridges to prevent investors and their heavy machinery from accessing the rivers. At times, local authorities used violence to disperse the activists.

Still, a grassroots river protection movement gradually captured broad popular support in Bosnia and abroad, especially after it disclosed that numerous contracts for the commercial exploitation of rivers were awarded to the politically connected.

"People stood up against investors on their rivers. They were not knowledgeable people, they were no ecological experts or scientists, they were ordinary people that live next to a river," Eichelmann said.

According to official data in Bosnia, painstakingly collected by activists, the owners of small Bosnian hydropower plants over the past decade have been raking in millions of euros in subsidies while paying minuscule concession fees, typically between 1% to 3% of their income.

In the meantime, the promised transition to renewable energy never really materialized. In 2021, Bosnia's small hydropower plants contributed only just over 2.5% of the nation's electricity.

The battle has been especially fierce along the Neretva River, a cool, emerald green 255-kilometer (158-mile) waterway that is a popular destination for rafters, fishermen and hikers. Before emptying into the Adriatic Sea in Croatia, the river and its tributaries run through both parts of Bosnia.

At first, stopping the commercial exploitation of Neretva and its tributaries, where 67 new small power plants were originally planned, appeared impossible, as it required deep knowledge of the different and sometimes conflicting laws in Bosnia's two administrative parts.

But unlike any other issue in Bosnia since the end of its brutal 1992-95 war, the opposition to commercial exploitation of the free-flowing rivers has brought people of different ethnic backgrounds together. So far, the activists fighting for the Neretva River basin have stopped or delayed the construction of 56 hydropower plants.

While villagers were physically blocking access to the rivers for construction crews, teams of legal experts and scientists have been challenging those permits in the courts. In about a dozen cases, Bosnian courts said authorities had failed to uphold the requirement to consult with local communities, protect nature

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conservation areas and demand environmental impact studies from investors before consenting to their plans. The court said authorities also failed to properly inspect the construction and operation of the plants.

Activists were especially pleased to prevent the construction of two small hydropower plants at the confluence of the Buna and Neretva rivers, a stunningly beautiful conservation area that provides habitat for the soft mouth trout, a species endemic to the Western Balkans.

In numerous other cases, however, authorities allowed construction projects to proceed despite successful legal challenges.

Lawmakers in Bosnia's other semi-autonomous part, Republika Srpska, responded to public pressure this year by halting subsidies for new plants with a capacity of over 150 kW, rather than with an outright ban. At the same time, some municipalities in Republika Srpska have distanced themselves from the small hydropower projects.

Yet even Thursday's conservation win has its limits. The new electricity law gives existing concession holders three years to obtain necessary permits and the approval of local communities for their projects to proceed. This has sparked fears that the investors and local authorities will again find ways to bend the rules.

"We proved in court that this is a nature conservation area and that by law no construction is allowed here," said Oliver Arapovic, 48, who spent eight years fighting to protect the confluence of Buna and Neretva rivers.

"We will use the protection of the law as much as possible, but if that fails, we are ready to defend this area, to block access to the investors and their heavy machinery with our own bodies," he added.

His fellow-activist, 61-year-old Miroslav Barisic, was equally emphatic.

"Locals here are determined to fight to the end, even if it requires dying" for the cause, he said.

Japan votes for key election in shadow of Abe assassination

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese went to the polls Sunday in the shadow of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was gunned down while making a campaign speech. Abe's governing party appeared to be cruising to a major victory.

As people voted, police in western Japan sent the alleged assassin to a local prosecutors' office for further investigation. A day earlier a top regional police official acknowledged possible security lapses that allowed the attacker to get so close and fire a bullet at the still-influential former Japanese leader.

In a country still recovering from the shock, sadness and fear of Abe's shooting — the first former or serving leader to be assassinated in postwar Japan — polling started for half of the upper house, the less powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament.

Abe was shot in Nara on Friday and airlifted to a hospital but died of blood loss. Police arrested a former member of Japan's navy at the scene. Police confiscated a homemade gun and several others were later found at his apartment.

The alleged attacker, Tetsuya Yamagami, told investigators he acted because of Abe's rumored connection to an organization that he resented, police said, but had no problem with the former leader's political view. The man had developed hatred toward a religious group that his mother was obsessed about and that bankrupted a family business, according to media reports, including some that identified the group as the Unification Church.

Abe's body, in a black hearse accompanied by his wife, Akie, returned to his home in Tokyo's upscale Shibuya, where many mourners, including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and top party officials, paid tribute. His wake and funeral are expected in coming days.

Nara prefectural police chief Tomoaki Onizuka on Saturday said that Abe's assassination was the "greatest regret" in his 27-year career. He said problems with security were undeniable, that he took the shooting seriously and will review the guarding procedures.

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Abe's assassination ahead of Sunday's parliamentary election shocked the nation and raised questions over whether adequate security was provided for the former prime minister.

Some observers who watched videos of the attack noted a lack of attention in the open space behind Abe as he spoke.

Experts also said Abe was more vulnerable standing on the ground level instead of atop a campaign vehicle, a standard for premier-class politicians, but that option was reportedly unavailable due to his hastily arranged visit to Nara.

Mitsuru Fukuda, a crisis management professor at Nihon University, said police were seen focusing frontward and paying little attention to what was behind Abe, noting that the suspect was approaching the former leader unnoticed until he fired the first shot.

"Clearly there were problems," Fukuda said.

The first shot narrowly missed Abe and hit an election vehicle. The second entered from his upper left arm damaged his neck artery, causing massive bleeding and death.

Fukuda said that election campaigns provide a chance for voters and politicians to interact because "political terrorism" was extremely rare in postwar Japan. It's a key democratic process, but Abe's assassination could prompt stricter security at crowded events like campaigns, sports games and others.

On Saturday, when party leaders went out for their final appeals under heightened security, there were no more fist-touches — a COVID-19 era alternative to handshakes — or other close-proximity friendly gestures they used to enjoy.

After Abe's assassination, Sunday's election had a new meaning, with all political leaders emphasizing the importance of free speech and their pledge not to back down to violence against democracy.

"We absolutely refuse to let violence shut out free speech," Kishida said in his final rally in northern city of Niigata on Saturday amid tightened security. "We must demonstrate that our democracy and election will not back down to violence."

According to the Asahi newspaper, Yamagami was a contract worker at a warehouse in Kyoto, operating a forklift. He was described as a quiet person in the beginning but started ignoring rules that led to quarrels with his colleagues, then he started missing work and quit in April citing health problems. A next-door neighbor at his apartment told Asahi he never met Yamagami, though he recalled hearing noises like a saw being used several times late at night over the past month.

Japan is known for its strict gun laws. With a population of 125 million, it had only 21 gun-related criminal cases in 2020, according to the latest government crime paper. Experts say, however, some recent attacks involved use of consumer items such as gasoline, suggesting increased risks for ordinary people to be embroiled in mass attacks.

While media surveys had predicted a major victory for the governing Liberal Democratic Party amid fractured and weak opposition, a wave of sympathy votes from Abe's assassination could bring a bigger victory than Kishida's modest goal of winning the house majority.

Even after stepping down as prime minister in 2020, Abe was highly influential in the LDP and headed its largest faction. His absence could change the power balance in the governing party that has almost uninterruptedly ruled postwar Japan since its 1955 foundation, experts say.

"This could be a turning point" for the LDP over its divisive policies on gender equality, same-sex marriages and other issues that Abe-backed ultra-conservatives with paternalistic family values had resisted, said Fukuda.

Japan's current diplomatic and security stance is unlikely to change because fundamental changes had already been made by Abe. His ultra-nationalist views and realistic policy measures made him a divisive figure to many, including in the Koreas and China.

Abe stepped down two years ago blaming a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis he'd had since he was a teenager. He said he regretted leave many of his goals unfinished, including the issue of Japanese abducted years ago by North Korea, a territorial dispute with Russia, and a revision to Japan's war-renouncing constitution that many conservatives consider a humiliation because of poor public support.

Abe was groomed to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. His

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political rhetoric often focused on making Japan a "normal" and "beautiful" nation with a stronger military through security alliance with the United States and bigger role in international affairs.

He became Japan's youngest prime minister in 2006, at age 52. But his overly nationalistic first stint abruptly ended a year later, also because of his health, prompting six years of annual leadership change.

He returned to office in 2012, vowing to revitalize the nation and get its economy out of its deflationary doldrums with his "Abenomics" formula, which combines fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reforms. He won six national elections and built a rock-solid grip on power.

Anger simmers for Dutch farmers who oppose pollution cuts

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

MAASLAND, Netherlands (AP) — Bales of hay lie burning along Dutch highways. Supermarket shelves stand empty because distribution centers are blocked by farmers. Then, at dusk, a police officer pulls his pistol and shoots at a tractor.

Dutch farmers are embroiled in a summer of discontent that shows no sign of abating. Their target? Government plans to rein in emissions of nitrogen oxide and ammonia that they say threatens to wreck their agricultural way of life and put them out of business.

The reduction targets could radically alter the Netherlands' lucrative agriculture sector, which is known for its intensive farming, and may also foreshadow similar reforms — and protests — in other European nations whose farmers also pump out pollutants.

That turmoil seems a long way off Friday at Jaap Zegwaard's dairy farm, which occupies 80 hectares (200 acres) of grassland close to the port city of Rotterdam, whose chimneys and cranes form a backdrop to his fields.

Most of Zegwaard's herd of 180 cattle, mostly black and white Holstein-Friesians, graze in meadows close to a traditional Dutch windmill and large white wind turbines. And even if the farm has been in Zegwaard's family for five generations, some 200 years, he doesn't know if he would recommend the farming life to his a 7-year-old daughter and 3-year-old twin boys.

"If you ask me now, I'd say, please don't even think about it," the 41-year-old said. "There are so many worries. Life's much too beautiful to deal with what's going on in the agriculture sector at the moment."

"Ask the average farmer: it's profoundly sad," he said.

At the heart of the clash between farmers and the Dutch government are moves to protect human health and vulnerable natural habitats from pollution in the form of nitrogen oxides and ammonia, which are produced by industry, transport and in the waste of livestock.

The Netherlands, a nation of 17.5 million people inhabiting an area a little larger than Maryland, has 1.57 million registered dairy cattle and just over 1 million calves being raised for meat, statistics show. The country's farms produced exports worth 94.5 billion euros in 2019.

Nitrogen oxides and ammonia raise nutrient levels and acidity in the soil, leading to a reduction in biodiversity. Airborne nitrogen leads to smog and tiny particles that are damaging to people's health.

When the Council of State, the country's top administrative court and legislative advisory body, ruled in 2019 that Dutch policies to rein in nitrogen emissions were inadequate, it forced the government to consider tougher measures.

Unveiling a map detailing nitrogen reduction targets last month, the Dutch government called it an "unavoidable transition." It said the coming year would finally bring clarity for Dutch farmers, "whether and how they can continue with their business. The minister sees three options for farmers: become (more) sustainable, relocate or stop."

The Dutch government aims to slash nitrogen emissions by 50% by 2030 and has earmarked an extra 24.3 billion euros (\$25.6 billion) to fund the changes. Provincial authorities have one year to draw up plans for achieving the reductions.

Nitrogen expert Wim de Vries, a professor at Wageningen University and Research, doubts that deadline is realistic.

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"It seems to be very fast and there is a legacy, already for 40 years, because the problem was much bigger in the 1980s. We then called it 'acid rain,'" he said. "Considering that legacy, it doesn't make so much difference if we do it in 7 or 10 or 12 years. We anyhow have to wait for decades for nature to improve seriously."

Farmers have been protesting for years against the government's nitrogen policies, but the emissions targets unleashed new demonstrations, with tractors clogging highways and supermarket distribution centers that led briefly to some shortages of fresh produce.

Farmers also clashed with police outside the home of the minister in charge of the government's nitrogen policies. And this week an officer opened fire on a tractor driven by a 16-year-old. After initially being held on suspicion of attempted manslaughter, the young driver was released without charge.

The Dutch government has appointed a veteran political negotiator to act as a middleman, but the gesture was immediately rejected by activist farmers and the nation's largest farming lobby group.

"The government does not offer any space to enter into a real conversation," said the farming lobby group LTO. "Under these conditions, speaking with the mediator is pointless."

The LTO, which represents about 30,000 farms — nearly a half of the Dutch total — described the nitrogen reduction target as "simply unfeasible." Dutch farms produced exports worth 94.5 billion euros in 2019.

The group says the government is focused on reducing livestock and buying up farms and not paying enough attention to innovation and sustainable farming practices.

Environmentalists say now is the time to act.

"You rip a plaster off a wound in one go," said Andy Palmen, director of Greenpeace Netherlands. "Painful choices are now necessary."

Zegwaard's farm is in an area where the government is seeking only a 12% cut in emissions, yet he also demonstrates out of solidarity with others and supports the protests.

"The average person currently sees the Netherlands as a nitrogen polluter, while we are also a food producer. It seems like people have forgotten that," he told The Associated Press.

Anxiety grows for Ukraine's grain farmers as harvest begins

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

ZHURIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — Oleksandr Chubuk's warehouse should be empty, awaiting the new harvest, with his supply of winter wheat already shipped abroad. Instead, his storage bins in central Ukraine are piled high with grain he cannot ship out because of the war with Russia.

The green spikes of wheat are already ripening. Soon, the horizon will look like the Ukrainian flag, a sea of gold beneath a blue sky. Chubuk expects to reap 500 tons, but for the first time in his 30 years as a farmer, he's uncertain about what to do with it.

"Hope is the only thing I have now," he said.

The war has trapped about 22 million tons of grain inside Ukraine, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a growing crisis for the country known as the "breadbasket of Europe" for its exports of wheat, corn and sunflower oil.

Before Russia's invasion, Ukraine could export 6 million to 7 million tons of grain per month, but in June it shipped only 2.2 million tons, according to the Ukrainian Grain Association. Normally, it sends about 30% of its grain to Europe, 30% to North Africa and 40% to Asia, said Mykola Horbachov, head of the association.

With Russia's blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports, the fate of the upcoming harvest in Ukraine is in doubt. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says the war is endangering food supplies for many developing nations and could worsen hunger for up to 181 million people.

Meanwhile, many farmers in Ukraine could go bankrupt. They are facing the most difficult situation since gaining independence in 1991, Horbachov said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said his country is working with the U.N., Ukraine, and Russia to find a solution, offering safe corridors in the Black Sea for wheat shipments.

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For now, Ukraine is trying less-effective alternatives to export its grain, at least to Europe. Currently, 30% of exports go via three Danube River ports in southwestern Ukraine.

The country also is trying to ship grain via 12 border crossings with European countries, but trucks must wait in line for days, and Europe's infrastructure cannot yet absorb such a volume of grain, Horbachov said. "It's impossible to build such infrastructure in one year," he told The Associated Press.

Russia's invasion also caused transportation costs to soar. The price to deliver this year's harvested barley to the closest Romanian port, Constanta, is now \$160 to \$180 per ton, up from \$40 to \$45. And yet a farmer selling barley to a trader gets less than \$100 per ton.

The losses are piling up, along with the harvest.

"Most of the farmers are running the risk of becoming bankrupt very soon. But they don't have any other option but to sell their grain cheaper than its cost," Horbachov said.

On top of such challenges, not all farmers can sell their grain.

Before the invasion, Chubuk could sell a ton of wheat from his Kyiv region farm for \$270. Now he can't find a buyer even at \$135 per ton.

"The whole system backs up," including storage options, said James Heneghan, senior vice president at Gro Intelligence, a global climate and agriculture data analytics company. The system was meant to keep Ukraine's exports flowing, not store them.

Without money coming in for grain, future harvests are challenging. "Farmers need to purchase fertilizers, seeds, diesel, pay the salary," Horbachov said. "Ukrainian farmers can't print money."

The country hasn't yet run out of storage as the harvest begins.

Ukraine has about 65 million to 67 million tons of commercial grain storage capacity, according to Horbachov, although 20% of that is in Russian-occupied territories. Farmers themselves can store 20 million to 25 million tons, but some of that is also in occupied areas.

By the end of September, when the harvest of corn and sunflower seeds begins, Ukraine will face a shortage of storage capacity.

The FAO recently announced a \$17 million project to help address the storage deficit. Heneghan of Gro Intelligence noted that one temporary solution could be providing farmers with silo bags for storage.

In eastern and southern regions near the front line, farmers continue to work their fields despite the threat to their lives.

"It can be finished in a moment by bombing, or as we see now, the fields are on fire," said Yuri Vakukenko in the Dnipropetrovsk region, black smoke visible in the distance.

His workers risk their lives for little return, with storage facilities now refusing to take their grain, Vakukenko said.

Ukraine had a record-breaking grain harvest last year, collecting 107 million tons. Even more had been expected this year.

Now, in the best-case scenario, farmers will harvest only 70 million tons of grain this year, Horbachov estimated.

"Without opening the (Black Sea) ports, I don't see any solution for Ukrainian farmers to survive," he said. "And if they don't survive, we won't be able to feed African countries."

Abe's killing haunts Japan with questions on handmade guns

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The shooting sent shudders through low-crime, orderly Japan: A high-profile politician gets killed by a man emerging from a crowd, wielding a handmade firearm so roughly made it's wrapped up in tape.

The 40-centimeter-long (16-inch) firearm that was used to kill former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday as he campaigned for his ruling party in Nara, western Japan, looked crude, more like a propellant made of pipes taped together and filled with explosives.

A raid of the suspect's home, a one-room apartment in Nara, turned up several such guns, police said.

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Unlike standard weapons, handmade guns are practically impossible to trace, making an investigation difficult.

Such weapons are rarely used in Japan, where most attacks involve stabbings or dousing a place with gasoline and setting it ablaze, or running haywire on the street in a vehicle.

Strict gun control laws likely made the suspect choose a handcrafted weapon. Tetsuya Yamagami, who was arrested on the spot, was a former member of Japan's navy, and knew how to handle and assemble weapons.

Crime experts say instructions on how to make guns are floating around on the internet, and guns can be made with a 3D printer.

Some analysts characterized the attack on Abe as "lone-wolf terrorism." In such cases, the perpetrator acts alone, often in sympathy with certain political views, making the crime very difficult to detect in advance.

The motive for Abe's assassination remains unclear. Japanese media reported that the suspect had developed hatred toward a religious group that his mother was obsessed about and that caused his family financial problems. The reports did not specify the group.

Japan has seen attacks on politicians in the past. In 1960, Abe's grandfather, then-Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, was stabbed but survived. In 1975, when then-Prime Minister Takeo Miki was assaulted at the funeral for former Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, Abe's great-uncle, Japan set up a security team modeled after the American Secret Service.

Hideto Ted Osanai, chief executive at the International Bodyguard Association in Japan, and other experts believe that the Japanese may have merely learned superficial things like escort formation rather than the prevention mindset critical to security.

"Japanese are so used to leading peaceful lives, the security guards were caught asleep," says Yasuhiro Sasaki, president of Safety-Pro, a Tokyo-based security company.

Sasaki said he couldn't believe that no one moved to protect Abe in the seconds between the first and the second shot, a scene shown over and over on national TV.

Guards should have acted by physically pulling Abe away from danger, Sasaki said. More critically, he wondered why weren't they aware of a suspicious person approaching, drawing what could be a weapon from a bag?

Isao Itabashi, chief of the research division at the Council for Public Policy, which oversees such risks, said that providing security during an election campaign was challenging when the whole point is for politicians to get close to people.

Unlike the U.S., the use of bulletproof glass is relatively scant in Japan, and security officials rarely resort to shooting potential attackers.

"The presumption here is that people are not armed," Itabashi said.

Osanai worried that more people may use handcrafted guns like the one used in Abe's assassination in "copycat crimes." He noted a trend of disgruntled people turning to random crimes, indiscriminately targeting victims.

"Japan's conformist culture makes it difficult for some people to live freely, and they put great pressure on themselves. When they blame themselves, they turn to suicide. When they blame others, they turn to indiscriminate crimes," he said.

Last year, a man wearing a Joker costume brandished a knife and started a fire on a Tokyo train, injuring 17 people. In December 2021, arson at a clinic in Osaka killed 25 people. In 2019, another arson in a Kyoto animation studio killed 36 people.

Sri Lanka president, PM to resign after tumultuous protests

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's president and prime minister agreed to resign Saturday after the country's most chaotic day in months of political turmoil, with protesters storming both officials' homes and setting fire to one of the buildings in a rage over the nation's severe economic crisis.

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Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he will leave office once a new government is in place, and hours later the speaker of Parliament said President Gotabaya Rajapaksa would step down Wednesday. Pressure on both men grew as the economic meltdown set off acute shortages of essential items, leaving people struggling to buy food, fuel and other necessities.

Police had attempted to thwart promised protests with a curfew, then lifted it as lawyers and opposition politicians denounced it as illegal. Thousands of protesters entered the capital, Colombo, and swarmed into Rajapaksa's fortified residence. Video images showed jubilant crowds splashing in the garden pool, lying on beds and using their cellphone cameras to capture the moment. Some made tea, while others issued statements from a conference room demanding that the president and prime minister go.

It was not clear if Rajapaksa was there at the time, and government spokesman Mohan Samaranayake said he had no information about the president's movements.

Protesters later broke into the prime minister's private residence and set it on fire, Wickremesinghe's office said. It wasn't immediately clear if he was there when the incursion happened.

Earlier, police fired tear gas at protesters who gathered in the streets to march on the presidential residence, waving flags, banging drums and chanting slogans. In all, more than 30 people were hurt in Saturday's chaos.

Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena said in a televised statement that he informed Rajapaksa that parliamentary leaders had met and decided to request he leave office, and the president agreed. However, Rajapaksa will remain temporarily to ensure a smooth transfer of power, Abeywardena added.

"He asked me to inform the country that he will make his resignation on Wednesday the 13th, because there is a need to hand over power peacefully," Abeywardena said.

"Therefore there is no need for further disturbances in the country, and I urge everyone for the sake of the country to maintain peace to enable a smooth transition," the speaker continued.

Opposition lawmaker Rauff Hakeem said a consensus was reached for the speaker of Parliament to take over as temporary president and work on an interim government.

Wickremesinghe announced his own impending resignation but said he would not step down until a new government is formed, angering protesters who demanded his immediate departure.

"Today in this country we have a fuel crisis, a food shortage, we have the head of the World Food Program coming here and we have several matters to discuss with the IMF," Wickremesinghe said. "Therefore, if this government leaves there should be another government."

Wickremesinghe said he suggested to the president to have an all-party government, but did not say anything about Rajapaksa's whereabouts. Opposition parties were discussing the formation of a new government.

Rajapaksa appointed Wickremesinghe as prime minister in May in the hope that the career politician would use his diplomacy and contacts to resuscitate a collapsed economy. But people's patience wore thin as shortages of fuel, medicine and cooking gas only increased and oil reserves ran dry. Authorities have also temporarily shuttered schools.

The country is relying on aid from India and other nations as leaders try to negotiate a bailout with the International Monetary Fund. Wickremesinghe said recently that negotiations with the IMF were complex because Sri Lanka was now a bankrupt state.

Sri Lanka announced in April that it was suspending repayment of foreign loans due to a foreign currency shortage. Its total foreign debt amounts to \$51 billion, of which it must repay \$28 billion by the end of 2027.

Months of demonstrations have all but dismantled the Rajapaksa political dynasty, which has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades but is accused by protesters of mismanagement and corruption. The president's older brother resigned as prime minister in May after violent protests saw him seek safety at a naval base.

With fuel costs making other forms of travel impossible for many, protesters crowded onto buses and trains Saturday to get to the capital, while others made their way on bicycles and on foot. At the president's seaside office, security personnel tried in vain to stop protesters who pushed through fences to

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run across the lawns and inside the colonial-era building.

At least 34 people including two police officers were hurt in scuffles. Two were in critical condition, while others sustained minor injuries, according to an official at the Colombo National Hospital who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Privately owned Sirasa Television said at least six of its workers, including four reporters, were hospitalized after being beaten by police while covering the protest at the prime minister's home.

Sri Lanka Medical Council, the country's top professional body, warned that hospitals were running with minimum resources and would not be able to handle any mass casualties from the unrest.

Protest and religious leaders said Rajapaksa has lost his mandate and it is time for him to go.

"His claim that he was voted in by the Sinhala Buddhists is not valid now," said Omalpe Sobitha, a prominent Buddhist leader. He urged Parliament to convene immediately to select an interim president.

U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung on Friday asked people to protest peacefully and called for the military and police "to grant peaceful protesters the space and security to do so."

"Chaos & force will not fix the economy or bring the political stability that Sri Lankans need right now," Chung tweeted.

Yosemite wildfire threatens grove of iconic sequoia trees

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — The largest grove of giant sequoias in Yosemite National Park remained closed Saturday as firefighters battled a blaze that threatened the gathering of the iconic trees and forced hundreds of campers to evacuate.

The rest of the park in California remained open, though smoke that hung in the air obscured some of the most scenic vistas and views.

More than 500 mature sequoias were threatened in the Mariposa Grove but as of Saturday afternoon there were no reports of severe damage to any named trees, including the 3,000-year-old Grizzly Giant. Some of the massive trunks were wrapped in fire-resistant foil for protection as the blaze burned out of control.

The cause of the fire was under investigation.

Beyond the trees, the small community of Wawona, which is surrounded by park and a campground, was under threat, with people ordered to leave their homes and campsites on Friday night.

The fire was proving difficult to contain, with firefighters throwing "every tactic imaginable" at it, said Nancy Phillippe, a Yosemite fire information spokesperson. That included air drops of fire retardant as well as the planned use of bulldozers to create fire lines, a tactic that's rarely used in a wilderness setting like Yosemite, Phillippe said.

The bulldozers would primarily be used to put in fire lines to protect Wawona, she said. About 600 to 700 people who were staying at the Wawona campground in tents, cabins and an historic hotel were ordered to leave.

Though firefighters were facing hot and dry conditions, they didn't have to contend with intense winds on Saturday, said Jeffrey Barlow, senior meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford. Given the relatively small size of the fire and minimal winds, smoke impacts were not expected to stretch far beyond the park, he said.

The giant sequoias, native in only about 70 groves spread along the western slope of California's Sierra Nevada range, were once considered impervious to flames but have become increasingly vulnerable as wildfires fueled by a buildup of undergrowth from a century of fire suppression and drought exacerbated by climate change have become more intense and destructive.

Lightning-sparked wildfires over the past two years have killed up to a fifth of the estimated 75,000 large sequoias, which are the biggest trees by volume.

There was no obvious natural spark for the fire that broke out Thursday next to the park's Washburn Trail, Phillippe said. Smoke was reported by visitors walking in the grove that reopened in 2018 after a \$40 million renovation that took three years.

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The fire had grown to about 1.9 square miles (4.8 square kilometers) by Saturday evening.

A fierce windstorm ripped through the grove a year-and-a-half ago and toppled 15 giant sequoias, along with countless other trees.

The downed trees, along with massive numbers of pines killed by bark beetles, provided ample fuel for the flames.

The park has used prescribed burns to clear brush around the sequoias, which helps protect them if flames spread farther into the grove.

Meanwhile, most evacuation orders were lifted Saturday in the Sierra foothills about 80 miles (128 kilometers) to the northwest of the Yosemite fire, where a fire broke out on July 4. The Electra Fire that began near Jackson was mostly contained, and only areas directly within the fire's perimeter remained under evacuation orders, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Luis Echeverria, Mexico leader blamed for massacres, dies

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Former Mexican President Luis Echeverria, who tried to cast himself as a progressive world leader but was blamed for some of Mexico's worst political killings of the 20th century, has died at the age of 100.

Current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador confirmed the death Saturday on his Twitter account and sent condolences to Echeverria's family and friends "in the name of the government of Mexico," but did not express any personal sadness about the death.

López Obrador did not provide a cause of death for Echeverria, who governed Mexico from 1970 to 1976. He had been hospitalized for pulmonary problems in 2018 and also had neurological difficulties in recent years.

Echeverria positioned himself as a left-leaning maverick allied with Third World causes during his presidency, but his role in the notorious massacres of leftist students in 1968 and 1971 made him hated by Mexican leftists, who for decades tried unsuccessfully to have him put on trial.

In 2004, he became the first former Mexican head of state formally accused of criminal wrongdoing. Prosecutors linked Echeverria to the country's so-called "dirty war" in which hundreds of leftist activists and members of fringe guerrilla groups were imprisoned, killed, or simply disappeared without a trace.

Special prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo asked a judge to issue an arrest warrant against Echeverria on genocide charges in the two student massacres, the first of which occurred when served as interior secretary, overseeing domestic security affairs.

On Oct. 2 1968, a few weeks before the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, government sharpshooters opened fire on student protesters in the Tlatelolco plaza, followed by soldiers posted there. Estimates of the dead have ranged from 25 to more than 300. Echeverria had denied any participation in the attacks.

According to military reports, at least 360 government snipers were placed on buildings surrounding the protesters.

In June 1971, during Echeverria's own term as president, students set out from a teacher's college just west of the city center for one of the first large-scale protests since the Tlatelolco massacre. They didn't get more than a few blocks before they were set upon by plainclothes thugs who were actually government agents known as the "Halcones," or "Falcons." Prosecutors say that group that participated in the beating or shooting deaths of 12 people.

That attack was depicted in the Oscar-winning 2018 movie "Roma," in which two characters stumble across the violence, which turns out to involve one of their boyfriends as a member of the Halcones.

In 2005, a judge ruled Echeverria could not be tried on genocide charges stemming from the 1971 killings, saying that while Echeverria may have been responsible for homicide, the statute of limitations for that crime expired in 1985.

In March 2009, a federal court upheld a lower court's ruling that Echeverria did not have to face genocide charges for his alleged involvement in the 1968 student massacre, and ordered his release, though

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opponents noted the case against him was never closed.

Echeverría never spent a day in jail, though he was under a form of house arrest for some time.

While few people in Mexico mourned the passing of Echeverría, Félix Hernández Gamundi — a 1968 student movement leader who was in Tlatelolco plaza on the day of the massacre, and who saw his friends gunned down — mourned what might have been.

“The death of ex-President Luis Echeverría is regrettable because it occurred in total silence, because despite his very long life, Luis Echeverría never decided to come clean about his actions,” Hernández Gamundi said.

“Of course we don’t mourn his death,” he said. “We mourn the opacity he displayed his entire life and his decision never to make an accounting, to always take advantage of his immense political and economic power that he enjoyed for the rest of his life.”

“He delayed for a long time the inevitable process of democracy that began in 1968,” Hernández Gamundi said, referring to the fact that the massacre became a catalyst for activists trying to end a system of one-party presidential rule. “October 2 marked the beginning of the end of the old regime, but it took many years afterward.”

Echeverría’s death came at a time that his Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI — which ruled Mexico with an iron hand for seven decades, before losing power for the first time in the elections of 2000 — is losing what little power it still had, discredited and riven by internal scandals and disputes.

“Things could have been different,” he said. “The PRI had a lot of opportunities to put things right and make an accounting.”

Born on Jan. 17, 1922, in Mexico City, Echeverría received a law degree from Mexico’s Autonomous National University in 1945.

Shortly afterward, he began his political career with PRI. He later held posts in the navy and Education Department, advanced to chief administrative officer of the PRI and organized the presidential campaign of Adolfo López Mateos, who was Mexico’s leader from 1958-64.

In 1964, under then-President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría was rewarded with the key position of interior secretary, overseeing domestic security. He held that position in 1968, when the government cracked down on student pro-democracy protests, apparently worried they would embarrass Mexico as the host of the Olympics that year.

Echeverría left the interior post in November 1969, when he became the PRI’s presidential candidate.

He won that race, and was sworn in on Dec. 1, 1970, and supported the governments of Cuba’s Fidel Castro and leftist Salvador Allende in Chile.

After Allende was assassinated in 1973 during a coup led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet, Echeverría opened Mexico’s borders to Chileans fleeing Pinochet’s dictatorship.

Domestically, Echeverría presided over boom times in Mexico in the 1970s linked to a bonanza in oil prices and oil discoveries. He vastly expanded the number of government-owned industries, a policy his successors later had to reverse because his ambitious public spending and building programs left Mexico deeply mired in debt.

Seeking to shed his repressive image, Echeverría wore the loose, open-necked tropical shirt known as the “guayabera” and he later pardoned many of the student leaders jailed during the crackdown on protests in 1968. He actively sought to recruit intellectuals with government jobs and money.

Echeverría traveled the world promoting himself as a leader of the third world and friend of leftist causes. But within Mexico, he couldn’t shake his reputation for cracking down on dissent.

According to Carrillo, the prosecutor who tried to charge him, Echeverría “was the master of illusion, the magician of deceit.”

Juan Velásquez, the lawyer who defended Echeverría, said the ex-president died at one of his homes, but did not specify a cause.

“I told Luis that even though nobody — not him, not me, not his family — wanted him to go on trial, in the end it was the best thing that could have happened,” because the charges were dropped, Velásquez said.

In his later years, Echeverría tried to project himself as an elder statesman, and a few times— when his

health permitted — held forth unrepentantly before journalists. But he mainly lived in reclusive retirement at his sprawling home in an upscale Mexico City neighborhood.

EXPLAINER: Why Sri Lanka's economy collapsed and what's next

By KRISHAN FRANCIS and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's prime minister said late last month that the island nation's debt-laden economy had "collapsed" as it runs out of money to pay for food and fuel. Short of cash to pay for imports of such necessities and already defaulting on its debt, it is seeking help from neighboring India and China and from the International Monetary Fund.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took office in May, was emphasizing the monumental task he faced in turning around an economy he said was heading for "rock bottom." On Saturday both he and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa agreed to resign amid mounting pressure from protesters who stormed both their residences and set fire to one of them.

Sri Lankans are skipping meals as they endure shortages and lining up for hours to try to buy scarce fuel. It's a harsh reality for a country whose economy had been growing quickly, with a growing and comfortable middle class, until the latest crisis deepened.

HOW SERIOUS IS THIS CRISIS?

The government owes \$51 billion and is unable to make interest payments on its loans, let alone put a dent in the amount borrowed. Tourism, an important engine of economic growth, has sputtered because of the pandemic and concerns about safety after terror attacks in 2019. And its currency has collapsed by 80%, making imports more expensive and worsening inflation that is already out of control, with food costs rising 57%, according to official data.

The result is a country hurtling towards bankruptcy, with hardly any money to import gasoline, milk, cooking gas and toilet paper.

Political corruption is also a problem; not only did it play a role in the country squandering its wealth, but it also complicates any financial rescue for Sri Lanka.

Anit Mukherjee, a policy fellow and economist at the Center for Global Development in Washington, said any assistance from the IMF or World Bank should come with strict conditions to make sure the aid isn't mismanaged.

Still, Mukherjee noted that Sri Lanka sits in one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, so letting a country of such strategic significance collapse is not an option.

HOW IS IT AFFECTING REAL PEOPLE?

Tropical Sri Lanka normally is not lacking for food, but people are going hungry. The U.N. World Food Program says nearly nine of 10 families are skipping meals or otherwise skimping to stretch out their food, while 3 million are receiving emergency humanitarian aid.

Doctors have resorted to social media to try to get critical supplies of equipment and medicine. Growing numbers of Sri Lankans are seeking passports to go overseas in search of work. Government workers have been given an extra day off for three months to allow them time to grow their own food.

In short, people are suffering and desperate for things to improve.

WHY IS THE ECONOMY IN SUCH DIRE STRAITS?

Economists say the crisis stems from domestic factors such as years of mismanagement and corruption.

Much of the public's ire has focused on President Rajapaksa and his brother, former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The latter resigned in May after weeks of anti-government protests that eventually turned violent.

Conditions have been deteriorating for the past several years. In 2019, Easter suicide bombings at churches and hotels killed more than 260 people. That devastated tourism, a key source of foreign exchange.

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The government needed to boost its revenues as foreign debt for big infrastructure projects soared, but instead Rajapaksa pushed through the largest tax cuts in Sri Lankan history. The tax cuts were recently reversed, but only after creditors downgraded Sri Lanka's ratings, blocking it from borrowing more money as its foreign reserves sank. Then tourism flatlined again during the pandemic.

In April 2021, Rajapaksa suddenly banned imports of chemical fertilizers. The push for organic farming caught farmers by surprise and decimated staple rice crops, driving prices higher. To save on foreign exchange, imports of other items deemed to be luxuries also were banned. Meanwhile, the Ukraine war has pushed prices of food and oil higher. Inflation was near 40% and food prices were up nearly 60% in May.

WHY DID THE PRIME MINISTER SAY THE ECONOMY HAS COLLAPSED?

The stark declaration in June by Wickremesinghe, who is in his sixth term as prime minister, threatened to undermine any confidence in the state of the economy and didn't reflect any specific new development. The prime minister appeared to be underscoring the challenges facing his government as it seeks help from the IMF and confronts criticism over the lack of improvement since he took office weeks earlier. The comment might have been intended to try to buy more time and support as he tries to get the economy back on track.

The Finance Ministry said Sri Lanka had only \$25 million in usable foreign reserves. That has left it without the wherewithal to pay for imports, let alone repay billions in debt.

Meanwhile the Sri Lankan rupee has weakened in value to about 360 to the U.S. dollar. That makes costs of imports even more prohibitive. Sri Lanka has suspended repayment of about \$7 billion in foreign loans due this year out of \$25 billion to be repaid by 2026.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING ABOUT THE CRISIS?

So far Sri Lanka has been muddling through, mainly supported by \$4 billion in credit lines from India. An Indian delegation came to the capital, Colombo, in June for talks on more assistance, but Wickremesinghe warned against expecting India to keep Sri Lanka afloat for long.

"Sri Lanka pins last hopes on IMF," read a June headline in the Colombo Times. The government is in negotiations with the IMF on a bailout plan, and Wickremesinghe has said he expected to have a preliminary agreement later this summer.

Sri Lanka has also sought more help from China. Other governments like the U.S., Japan and Australia have provided a few hundred million dollars in support.

Earlier in June, the United Nations launched a worldwide public appeal for assistance. So far, projected funding barely scratches the surface of the \$6 billion the country needs to stay afloat over the next six months.

To counter Sri Lanka's fuel shortage, Wickremesinghe told The Associated Press in a recent interview that he would consider buying more steeply discounted oil from Russia.

Production resumes at troubled Abbott baby formula factory

By FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

Production of baby formula has resumed at the Abbott Nutrition factory in Michigan whose February shutdown over contamination contributed to a national shortage, a company spokesman said.

Damage from severe thunderstorms including flooding had forced the Sturgis plant to halt operations in mid-June just two weeks after restarting production with additional sanitizing and safety protocols.

Production of EleCare, a specialty formula for infants with severe food allergies and digestive problems, was restored at Sturgis following a July 1 reboot, said Abbott spokesman John Koval.

"We are working to restart Similac production as soon as we can. We'll provide more information when we have it," he said via email.

Abbott recalled several leading brands of formula in February, including Similac. That squeezed supplies already been strained by supply chain disruptions and stockpiling during COVID-19 shutdowns.

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The shortage was most dire for children with allergies, digestive problems and metabolic disorders who rely on specialty formulas.

President Joe Biden's administration has since eased import rules for foreign manufacturers, airlifted formula from Europe and invoked federal emergency rules to prioritize U.S. production.

Abbott is one of just four companies that produce about 90% of U.S. formula. Koval declined to say how much of Abbott's overall U.S. supply of infant formula is produced at the Sturgis plant.

The plant was closed in February after the Food and Drug Administration began investigating four bacterial infections among infants who consumed powdered formula from the plant. Two of the babies died. The company says its products have not been directly linked to the infections, which involved different bacterial strains.

FDA inspectors eventually uncovered a host of violations at the plant, including bacterial contamination, a leaky roof and lax safety protocols.

On Wednesday, the Food and Drug Administration announced plans to help overseas makers of infant formula that have sent supplies, under emergency approval to address the shortfall, secure long-term authorization to market their formula in the U.S. The plan is to provide American consumers with more choices and make supplies more resilient against current or future shortages.

FDA commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, and Susan Mayne, the director of the agency's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, said in a statement that the Sturgis plant shutdown "compounded by unforeseen natural weather events, has shown just how vulnerable the supply chain has become."

Tribal elders recall painful boarding school memories

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

ANADARKO, Okla. (AP) — Native American tribal elders who were once students at government-backed Indian boarding schools testified Saturday about the hardships they endured, including beatings, whippings, sexual assaults, forced haircuts and painful nicknames.

They came from different states and different tribes, but they shared the common experience of having attended the schools that were designed to strip Indigenous people of their cultural identities.

"I still feel that pain," said 84-year-old Donald Neconie, a former U.S. Marine and member of the Kiowa Tribe who once attended the Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) southwest of Oklahoma City. "I will never, ever forgive this school for what they did to me.

"It may be good now. But it wasn't back then."

As the elders spoke, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, herself a Laguna Pueblo from New Mexico and the first Native American cabinet secretary in U.S. history, listened quietly. The event at the Riverside Indian School, which still operates today but with a vastly different mission, was the first stop on a yearlong nationwide tour to hear about the painful experiences of Native Americans who were sent to the government-backed boarding schools.

"Federal Indian boarding school policies have touched every Indigenous person I know," Haaland said at the start of the event, which attracted Native Americans from throughout the region. "Some are survivors. Some are descendants. But we all carry the trauma in our hearts.

"My ancestors endured the horrors of the Indian boarding school assimilation policies carried out by the same department that I now lead. This is the first time in history that a cabinet secretary comes to the table with this shared trauma."

Haaland's agency recently released a report that identified more than 400 of the schools, which sought to assimilate Native children into white society during a period that stretched from the late 18th century until the late 1960s.

Although most closed their doors long ago and none still exist to strip students of their identities, some still function as schools, albeit with drastically different missions that celebrate the cultural backgrounds of their Native students. Among them is Riverside, which is one of oldest.

Riverside, which opened in 1871, serves students from grades four through 12 these days, offering them

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specialized academic programs as well as courses on cultural topics such as bead-working, shawl-making and an introduction to tribal art, foods and games. Currently operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, it has nearly 800 students from more than 75 tribes across the country, and the school's administration, staff and faculty are mostly Native American.

It is one of 183 elementary and secondary schools across the country funded by the Bureau of Indian Education that seek to provide education aligned with a tribe's needs for cultural and economic well-being, according to the bureau's website.

But Riverside also has a dark history of mistreating the thousands of Native American students who were forced from their homes to attend it.

Neconie, who still lives in Anadarko, recalled being beaten if he cried or spoke his native Kiowa language when he attended Riverside in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

"Every time I tried to talk Kiowa, they put lye in my mouth," he said. "It was 12 years of hell."

Brought Plenty, a Standing Rock Sioux who lives in Dallas, recalled the years she spent at Indian boarding schools in South Dakota, where she was forced to cut her hair and told not to speak her Native language. She recalled being forced to whip other girls with wet towels and being punished when she didn't.

"What they did to us makes you feel so inferior," she said. "You never get past this. You never forget it."

Until recently, the federal government hadn't been open to examining its role in the troubled history of Native American boarding schools. But this has changed because people who know about the trauma that was inflicted hold prominent positions in government.

At least 500 children died at such schools, but that number is expected to reach into the thousands or tens of thousands as more research is done.

The Interior Department's report includes a list of the boarding schools in what were states or territories that operated between 1819 and 1969 that had a housing component and received support from the federal government.

Oklahoma had the most, 76, followed by Arizona, which had 47, and New Mexico, which had 43. All three states still have significant Native American populations.

Former students might be hesitant to recount the painful past and trust a government whose policies were to eradicate tribes and, later, assimilate them under the veil of education. But some welcome the opportunity to share their stories for the first time.

Not all the memories from those who attended the schools were painful ones.

Dorothy WhiteHorse, 89, a Kiowa who attended Riverside in the 1940s, said she recalled learning to dance the jitterbug in the school's gymnasium and learning to speak English for the first time. She also recalled older Kiowa women who served as house mothers in the dormitories who let her speak her Native language and treated her with kindness.

"I was helped," WhiteHorse said. "I'm one of the happy ones."

But WhiteHorse also had some troubling memories, including the time she said three young boys ran away from the home and got caught in a snowstorm. She said all three froze to death.

"I think we need a memorial for those boys," she said.

Ukrainian governor: Russia raising 'true hell' in the east

By MARIA GRAZIA MURRU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces are raising "true hell" in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, despite assessments they were taking an operational pause, a regional governor said Saturday, while another Ukrainian official urged people in Russian-occupied southern areas to evacuate quickly "by all possible means" before a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Deadly Russian shelling was reported in Ukraine's east and south.

The governor of the eastern Luhansk region, Serhyi Haidaj, said Russia launched more than 20 artillery, mortar and rocket strikes on the region overnight and its forces were pressing toward the border with the Donetsk region.

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"We are trying to contain the Russians' armed formations along the entire front line," Haidai wrote on Telegram.

Last week, Russia captured the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in Luhansk, the city of Lysychansk. Analysts predicted Moscow's troops likely would take some time to rearm and regroup.

But "so far there has been no operational pause announced by the enemy. He is still attacking and shelling our lands with the same intensity as before," Haidai said. He later said the Russian bombardment of Luhansk was suspended because Ukrainian forces had destroyed ammunition depots and barracks used by the Russians.

Ukraine's deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, appealed to residents of Russian-held territories in the south to evacuate quickly so the occupying forces could not use them as human shields during a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

"You need to search for a way to leave, because our armed forces are coming to de-occupy," she said. "There will be a massive fight."

Speaking at a news conference late Friday, Vereshchuk said a civilian evacuation effort was underway for parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. She declined to give details, citing safety.

It was not clear how civilians were expected to safely leave Russian-controlled areas while missile strikes and artillery shelling continue in surrounding areas, whether they would be allowed to depart or even hear the government's appeal.

The war's death toll continued to rise.

Five people were killed and eight more wounded in Russian shelling Friday of Siversk and Semyhirya in the Donetsk region, its governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, wrote Saturday on Telegram.

In the city of Sloviansk, named as a likely next target of Russia's offensive, rescuers pulled a 40-year-old man from the rubble of a building destroyed Saturday by shelling. Kyrylenko said multiple people were under the debris.

Russian missiles also killed two people and wounded three others Saturday in the southern city of Kryvyi Rih, according to regional authorities.

"They deliberately targeted residential areas," Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, said on Telegram. Kryvyi Rih's mayor, Oleksandr Vilkul, asserted on Facebook that cluster munitions had been used and urged residents not to approach unfamiliar objects in the streets. More explosions were reported Saturday evening.

Kryvyi Rih is the hometown of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who visited Friday to meet with Vilkul and the brigadier general who commands troops in the region. Zelenskyy's office said he was briefed on the "construction of defensive structures," the support of the troops, the supply of food and medicine to the city and the help given people who had fled to Kryvyi Rih after being driven out of their homes elsewhere in Ukraine.

In northeast Ukraine, a Russian rocket strike on Saturday hit the center of Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, injuring six people, including a 12-year-old girl, authorities said.

"An Iskander ballistic missile was probably used," the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office said. "One of the missiles hit a two-story building, which led to its destruction. Neighboring houses were damaged."

The city has been targeted throughout the war, including several times in the past week. As survivor Valentina Mirgorodskaya dabbed at a cut on her cheek, first responders warily inspected the building shattered in Saturday's strike.

Mykolaiv Mayor Oleksandr Senkevych reported on Telegram that six Russian missiles were fired at his city in southern Ukraine near the Black Sea, but caused no casualties.

"On this day alone, Russia hit Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Krivyi Rih, villages in the Zaporizhzhia region," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. "It hit residential areas, absolutely consciously and on purpose. ... For days on end, the brutal strikes of Russian artillery ... don't stop. Such terrorist action can be stopped only with weapons — modern and powerful ones."

Russian defense officials claimed Saturday that their forces destroyed a hangar housing U.S. howitzers

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in the Donetsk region, near the town of Chasiv Yar. There was no immediate response from Ukraine.

In other developments on Saturday:

— Zelenskyy dismissed several ambassadors, including Ukraine's ambassador to Germany, Andriy Melnyk, who has been an outspoken advocate of Kyiv's cause but also ruffled feathers in Berlin. He was persistently critical of Germany's perceived slowness to provide heavy weapons. He also faced criticism for an interview in which he defended Stepan Bandera, a controversial World War II-era Ukrainian nationalist. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying Melnyk was only speaking for himself. Zelenskyy said the dismissals of the ambassadors were part of a routine rotation. Melnyk had served in the post since 2015.

— Ukraine's national police force said it was opening a criminal investigation into the Russian military's alleged destruction of crops in the southern Kherson region. In a Telegram post, it accused Russian troops of not allowing residents to put out fires in fields and otherwise sabotaging the harvest.

— The British Defense Ministry said Russian forces in Ukraine were now being armed with "obsolete or inappropriate equipment," including MT-LB armored vehicles taken out of long-term storage that do not provide the same protection as modern tanks.

"While MT-LBS have previously been in service in support roles on both sides, Russia long considered them unsuitable for most frontline infantry transport roles," the British ministry said on Twitter.

— Ukraine's sports minister, Vadym Gutzeit, said 100 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have been killed either on the battlefield or from Russian shelling, while 22 were captured by Russian forces. In a Facebook post, Gutzeit said more than 3,000 athletes are now in uniform.

Amid chaos, some at July 4 parade ran toward gunfire to help

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — Bobby Shapiro ran down Central Avenue in socks, moving toward the street corner where gunfire had erupted just moments before. At first, he only wanted to confirm that what he was hearing was real — a mass shooting at a July 4 parade in Highland Park.

Any sense of disbelief vanished with the sight of bone fragments, blood and pieces of flesh lying in the street where a parade was marching just minutes before. Then he saw the bodies.

"It was pure horror. It was a battle zone," Shapiro, 52, said in an interview. When the gunshots first went off, he had been changing out of his cycling shoes about 100 yards away.

Emergency vehicles and first responders were not yet at the scene, so Shapiro, a tech salesman with no medical training, began doing whatever he could to help.

From the bystanders who tied tourniquets and administered CPR to the fleeing parade-goers who rescued and cared for an orphaned two-year-old covered in blood, people from every corner of the Highland Park community sprung into action on July 4 in the wake of unspeakable tragedy.

Nearly a dozen people, including off-duty doctors, nurses and a football coach, were among the first to administer lifesaving assistance to victims of the parade shooting.

"Things happen so quickly that your brain can't possibly comprehend that there is an active shooter in your town, in your sleepy little neighborhood," said Dr. Wendy Rush, an anesthesiologist with decades of experience working in trauma centers.

Rush joined Shapiro in trying to save an elderly man who had a gunshot wound in his thigh and another that left a gaping hole in his abdomen.

While Rush used a ventilation mask and bag to help the elderly man breathe, Shapiro and another bystander took turns giving chest compressions and holding pressure on his wounds.

All the while, "We didn't know where the shooter was. We knew he wasn't dead," Rush said.

Nearly 30 minutes later, Rush boarded an ambulance alongside the dying man, and Shapiro, in shorts stained with blood, walked back to the bench where he'd been changing his shoes what felt like hours earlier.

The man died at the hospital, and was later identified as Stephen Straus, an 88-year-old financial advisor.

Rush's husband and son were also on the scene. As members of Highland Park's Community Emergency Response Team, both men have training in first aid and basic life support. They were working the parade

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expecting to assist with the regular crowd control and the occasional lost child.

Rush's son cared for people with less critical gunshot wounds, applying tourniquets and pressure to stop their bleeding. Her husband, Rush said, spent most of his time caring for Keely Roberts, a school superintendent shot twice in her foot and leg.

Roberts' 8-year-old son Cooper, shot in the chest, remains in serious condition at University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital with a severed spine.

His twin brother, Luke, was nearby.

"I'll never forget his face. He was just hysterical. He kept saying, 'Don't let my mommy die, don't let my mommy die. Don't let her lips turn blue like my brother.' It was the worst you could ever imagine," Eddie Rush told Fox 32 Chicago.

Football coach Brad Hokin was at his usual spot at the beginning of the route when the shooting started. He took off running down the bloodied street past those with minor injuries and toward the people he could tell needed assistance most urgently.

When his wife, nurse practitioner Jacquie Toia, called from their seats about a quarter mile away to make sure he was OK, Hokin simply told her, "Get up here. We need you."

Toia, 58, hurried to the scene still unsure of what was happening. When she saw the destruction, her instincts kicked into gear. As a nurse for 36 years, Toia had experience working in an emergency setting.

By that point, paramedics on scene had equipment, and Toia and another nurse on the scene began to administer IVs.

Meanwhile Hokin, with no prior medical training, was holding pressure on gunshot wounds and helping EMTs load the wounded onto gurneys until all the victims were safely en route to hospitals.

"We did what we could to take care of the immediate needs, and that's probably the real tragedy – we didn't have enough hands to do what needed to be done," Toia said. Responders were overwhelmed by the sheer number of casualties.

"Thirty-six years in medicine is enough that loss is not a stranger to me," Toia said. "This was so different. This was hell."

Dr. David Baum, an OBGYN and longtime attendee of the parade, was sitting with his family when the shooting started. The doctor rushed to help, and found bodies destroyed by bullets. Baum recalled trying to move people to ambulances and seeing wounds unlike anything he'd dealt with before.

"These were wartime injuries," Baum said.

Baum and Toia both expressed their frustrations that the shooter had such easy access to high-capacity weapons. "You should never have to worry about being killed in your street on the Fourth of July at a parade," Toia said.

Dr. Rush's son, Shane Selig, said everyone is still processing what happened.

"There are those that feel guilty they didn't do more," he said, while adding, "at least I could do something."

But it is hard, this aftermath. People, he said, will be "forever scarred by this." And it makes him angry.

The images of the hurt and dying haunt those who ran to help.

Shapiro wakes up and when he opens his eyes, "It's the 'bang, bang, bang, bang, bang of the shooting and initial panic again."

For Toia, "The children's faces running and screaming and crying and falling will never escape me."

Still, Hokin says it won't deter him next year from joining with the community he loves.

In his 58 years, he's been to the parade 52 times. Even during the pandemic when the parade was canceled, he went out just to say he was there.

"I'm sure next Fourth of July, I'll be on the corner at 8 o'clock, waiting for the parade."

Elena Rybakina wins Wimbledon women's final for 1st Slam

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — As "unexpected" and "unbelievable" as Elena Rybakina found her Wimbledon championship to be and as "super happy" as she was about winning a Grand Slam title at age 23 and ranked 23rd, her immediate reaction to grabbing the last point of the final Saturday was as

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muted as possible.

She exhaled. She walked to the net to shake the hand of her opponent, No. 2-ranked Ons Jabeur. She allowed herself only the slightest of smiles as she looked up to glance at the excitement in the Centre Court guest box. No screams of joy. No jumps in the air. No collapse onto the grass.

"I need to teach her," the effusive Jabeur noted later, "how to celebrate really good."

It was not until more than two hours after the conclusion of her 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 victory over the No. 2-ranked Jabeur that Rybakina was overcome by the significance of it all, including earning the first singles trophy at a major tournament for her adopted country of Kazakhstan.

That moment of realization came when, during a news conference filled with questions about her lack of outward expression on court, a reporter asked what Rybakina thought her parents' reaction would be to this triumph. They were not on hand Saturday; she had not spoken to them yet.

"Probably," she said, her eyes welling with tears, her face reddening, her hand placed over her mouth, "they're going to be super proud."

And then, after a pause, Rybakina joked: "You wanted to see emotion!"

This was the first Wimbledon women's final since 1962 between a pair of players both making a debut in a Grand Slam title match, and Rybakina acknowledged being nervous at the start. When she stepped into the sunshine filling the 100-year-old stadium, she did not wave to the spectators, the way Jabeur did. Instead, Rybakina kept a firm double-grip on the black-and-red straps of the racket bag slung over her shoulders.

And it was Jabeur who played better in the early going, handling Rybakina's strong serve and groundstrokes to break for a 2-1 edge.

Rybakina's miscues mounted. A volley into the net tape with the full court wide open. A netted forehand after Jabeur barely got a short return in. When another forehand off Rybakina's red racket went awry, Jabeur broke at love to take the opening set, yelled "Yalla!" — Arabic for "Let's go!" — and threw an up-percut as she walked to the sideline.

Jabeur, a 27-year-old from Tunisia, entered on a 12-match winning streak, all on grass courts, and was trying to become the first Arab or African woman to win a Slam singles title in the professional era, which dates to 1968.

"I just try to inspire as many generations as I can," said Jabeur, who had stored a photo of the Wimbledon women's singles trophy on her phone for inspiration. "I hope they're not really disappointed, but I'll try my best next time."

Rybakina was born in Moscow and has represented Kazakhstan since 2018, when that country offered her funding to support her tennis career. The switch has been a topic of conversation during Wimbledon, because the All England Club barred athletes who represent Russia or Belarus from entering the tournament due to the war in Ukraine.

The women's and men's tennis tours responded to that by withholding all ranking points from Wimbledon, meaning Rybakina will not get the bump up she would have in any other year.

"I didn't choose where I was born," Rybakina said. "People believed in me. Kazakhstan supported me so much."

Since the WTA computer rankings began in 1975, just one woman ranked lower than Rybakina has won Wimbledon — Venus Williams in 2007 at No. 31, although she had been No. 1 and already won three of her five career Wimbledon trophies.

Be the second set, Rybakina, who beat Serena Williams at last year's French Open, began showing why she leads the tour in aces in 2022, why, as she put it, "It's effortless, the power I have."

Her first break chance finally arrived more than an hour in, and Rybakina converted it to go up 1-0 when Jabeur missed a forehand. After saving four break points over her next two service games, Rybakina broke again and soon led 5-1.

"I didn't play my best tennis, let's say, second and third set," said Jabeur, who leads the women's tour with 13 victories in three-setters this year. "She started to be more aggressive. I think she stepped in the

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court much more and put a lot of pressure on me.”

Hitting her flat forehands deep into the court, never quite allowing Jabeur to regain her rhythm, Rybakina broke to begin the third. There was one last crucial moment: Jabeur, who uses as many spins and slices and variety as anyone in the game, parlayed a drop shot and a lob into love-40 on Rybakina’s serve.

But Rybakina took the next five points, aided by a couple of 119 mph serves, to go up 4-2, then quickly broke again.

“Frustrating,” Jabeur said.

Not much later, it was over.

“I didn’t know what to do. It was shocking,” Rybakina said, explaining that she was so “in shock” she didn’t hear half of what the Duchess of Cambridge told her during the trophy ceremony.

“Maybe one day you will see huge reaction from me,” she said with a smile, “but unfortunately not today.”

Rybakina acknowledged afterward she didn’t expect to get to the fortnight’s second week, let alone the final weekend.

Now she is, and forever will be, a Grand Slam champion.

“It’s difficult to describe now how I feel. But for sure, I’m going to remember these two weeks, especially today, forever,” Rybakina said. “I mean, it’s just something I will never forget.”

UN: Russia and Ukraine are to blame for nursing home attack

By RICHARD LARDNER and BEATRICE DUPUY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Russian forces assaulted a nursing home in the eastern region of Luhansk. Dozens of elderly and disabled patients, many of them bedridden, were trapped inside without water or electricity.

The March 11 assault set off a fire that spread throughout the facility, suffocating people who couldn’t move. A small number of patients and staff escaped and fled into a nearby forest, finally getting assistance after walking for 5 kilometers (3 miles).

In a war awash in atrocities, the attack on the nursing home near the village of Stara Krasnyanka stood out for its cruelty. And Ukrainian authorities placed the fault squarely on Russian forces, accusing them of killing more than 50 vulnerable civilians in a brutal and unprovoked attack.

But a new U.N. report has found that Ukraine’s armed forces bear a large, and perhaps equal, share of the blame for what happened in Stara Krasnyanka, which is about 580 kilometers (360 miles) southeast of Kyiv. A few days before the attack, Ukrainian soldiers took up positions inside the nursing home, effectively making the building a target.

At least 22 of the 71 patients survived the assault, but the exact number of people killed remains unknown, according to the United Nations.

The report by the U.N.’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights doesn’t conclude the Ukrainian soldiers or the Russian troops committed a war crime. But it said the battle at the Stara Krasnyanka nursing home is emblematic of the human rights office’s concerns over the potential use of “human shields” to prevent military operations in certain areas.

This story is part of an ongoing investigation from The Associated Press and the PBS series “Frontline” that includes the War Crimes Watch Ukraine interactive experience and an upcoming documentary.

The aftermath of the attack on the Stara Krasnyanka home also provides a window into how both Russia and Ukraine move quickly to set the narrative for how events are unfolding on the ground — even when those events may still be shrouded by the fog of war. For Ukraine, maintaining the upper hand in the fight for hearts and minds helps to ensure the continued flow of billions of dollars in Western military and humanitarian aid.

Russia’s frequently indiscriminate shelling of apartment buildings, hospitals, schools and theaters has been the primary cause of the war’s thousands of civilian casualties. Ukraine and its allies, including the

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United States, have rebuked Moscow for the deaths and injuries and called for those responsible to be brought to justice.

But Ukraine also must abide by the international rules of the battlefield. David Crane, a former Defense Department official and a veteran of numerous international war crime investigations, said the Ukrainian forces may have violated the laws of armed conflict by not evacuating the nursing home's residents and staff.

"The bottom-line rule is that civilians cannot intentionally be targeted. Period. For whatever reason," Crane said. "The Ukrainians placed those people in a situation which was a killing zone. And you can't do that."

The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline," drawing from a variety of sources, have independently documented hundreds of attacks across Ukraine that likely constitute war crimes. The vast majority appear to have been committed by Russia. But a handful, including the destruction of the Stara Krasnyanka care home, indicate Ukrainian fighters are also to blame.

The first reports in the media about the Stara Krasnyanka nursing home largely reflected statements issued by Ukrainian officials more than a week after the fighting ended.

Serhiy Haidai, the governor of Luhansk, declared in a March 20 post to his Telegram account that 56 people had been killed "cynically and deliberately" by "Russian occupiers" who "shot at close range from a tank." The office of Ukraine's prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, said in a statement issued the same day that 56 elderly people died due to the "treacherous actions" of the Russian forces and their allies. Neither statement mentioned whether Ukrainian soldiers had entered the home before the fighting began.

The Luhansk regional administration, which Haidai leads, did not respond to requests for comment. The Ukrainian prosecutor general's office told the AP on Friday that its Luhansk division continues to investigate Russia's "indiscriminate shelling and forced transfer of persons" from the nursing home. About 50 patients were killed in the attack, the office said, fewer than it stated in March. The prosecutor general's office did not directly respond to the U.N. report, but said it also is looking into whether Ukrainian troops had been in the home.

Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for eight years in the mostly Russian-speaking eastern industrial heartland, the Donbas, which includes the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. They have declared two independent "people's" republics, which were recognized by Russia just before the war began. After the invasion, these separatist fighters came under Russian command.

Viktoriya Serdyukova, the human rights commissioner for the Luhansk separatist government, said in a March 23 statement that the Ukrainian troops were responsible for casualties at the nursing home. The residents had been taken hostage by Ukrainian "militants" and many of them were "burned alive" in a fire started by the Ukrainians as they were retreating, she said.

The U.N. report examined violations of international human rights law that have occurred in Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. The Stara Krasnyanka attack totals just two paragraphs in the 38-page report. Although brief, this short section is the most detailed and independent examination of the incident that's been made public.

The Stara Krasnyanka section is based on eyewitness accounts from staff who survived the attack and information provided by relatives of residents, according to a U.N. official who wasn't authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is still working to fully document the case, the official said. Among the remaining questions are how many people were killed and who they were.

At the beginning of March, according to the U.N. report, "when active hostilities drew nearer to the care house," its management requested repeatedly that local authorities evacuate the residents. But an evacuation wasn't possible because Ukrainian forces were believed to have mined the surrounding area and blocked roads, the report said. The home is built on a hill and is near a key highway, which made the location strategically important.

On March 7, Ukrainian soldiers entered the nursing home, according to the U.N. Two days later, they "engaged in an exchange of fire" with the Moscow-backed separatists, "although it remains unclear which

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side opened fire first," the report said. No staff or residents were injured in this first exchange.

On March 11, 71 residents and 15 staff remained in the home with no access to water or electricity. That morning, the Luhansk separatist forces, which the U.N. referred to as "Russian-affiliated armed groups," attacked with heavy weapons, the report said.

"A fire started and spread across the care house, while the fighting was ongoing," according to the U.N. An unspecified number of patients and staff fled the home and ran into a nearby forest and were eventually met by the separatist fighters, who gave them assistance, according to the U.N.

A correspondent for the state-owned Russia-1 news channel gained access to the war-ravaged home after the battle and posted a video to his Telegram account in April that accused the Ukrainian soldiers of using "helpless old people" as human shields.

The correspondent, Nikolai Dolgachev, was accompanied into the building by a man identified in the video as a Luhansk separatist soldier who goes by the call sign "Wolf." The extensive damage to the building, both inside and out, is visible in the video. A body is laying on the floor. The AP verified that the location in the video posted by Dolgachev is the care home by comparing it to other videos and photos of the building.

Dolgachev said the Ukrainian troops set up a "machine gun nest" and an anti-tank weapon in the home. In the video, he stops amid the rubble inside the building to rest his hand on the anti-tank weapon, which he incorrectly called a Tor. The Tor is a Russian-made surface-to-air missile.

Ian Williams, a military expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, reviewed the video and said the weapon is an RK-3 Corsar, a Ukrainian-built portable anti-tank guided missile.

While the opposing sides blame each other for the Stara Krasnyanka tragedy, the grim reality is that much of the war in Ukraine is being fought in populated areas, increasing the potential for civilian casualties. Those deaths and injuries become almost inevitable when the civilians are caught in the line of fire.

"The Russians are the bad guys (in this conflict). That's pretty clear," Crane said. "But everybody is accountable to the law and the laws of armed conflict."

Abe's death raises security questions as Japan mourns

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A top police official on Saturday acknowledged possible security lapses that allowed an assassin to fire his gun into former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe while he was addressing a campaign rally, raising questions how could the attacker get so close behind him.

Abe was shot in the western city of Nara on Friday and airlifted to a hospital but died of blood loss. Police arrested the attacker, a former member of Japan's navy, at the scene. Police confiscated his homemade gun and several others were later found at his apartment.

The attacker, Tetsuya Yamagami, told investigators he acted because he believed rumors that Abe was connected to an organization that he resents, police said. Japanese media reported that the man had developed hatred toward a religious group that his mother was obsessed about and that caused his family financial problems. The reports did not specify the group.

On Saturday, a black hearse carrying Abe's body and accompanied by his wife, Akie, arrived at his home in Tokyo's upscale residential area of Shibuya. Many mourners, including top party officials, waited for his remains and lowered their heads as the vehicle passed.

Nara prefectural police chief Tomoaki Onizuka said Abe's assassination was his "greatest regret" in a 27-year career.

"I cannot deny there were problems with our security," Onizuka said. "Whether it was a setup, emergency response, or ability of individuals, we still have to find out. Overall, there was a problem and we will review it from every perspective."

Abe's assassination ahead of Sunday's parliamentary election shocked the nation and raised questions over whether security for the former prime minister was adequate.

Some observers who watched videos of the attack noted a lack of attention in the open space behind Abe as he spoke.

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A former Kyoto prefectural police investigator, Fumikazu Higuchi, said the footage suggested security was sparse at the event and insufficient for a former prime minister.

"It is necessary to investigate why security allowed Yamagami to freely move and go behind Mr. Abe," Higuchi told a Nippon TV talk show.

Experts also said Abe was more vulnerable standing on the ground level, instead of atop a campaign vehicle, which is usually the case but was reportedly unavailable due to his hastily arranged visit to Nara.

"Looks like police were mainly focusing on frontward, while paying little attention to what's behind Mr. Abe, and nobody stopped the suspect approaching him," said Mitsuru Fukuda, a crisis management professor at Nihon University. "Clearly there were problems."

Fukuda said that election campaigns provide a chance for voters and politicians to interact because "political terrorism" was extremely rare in postwar Japan. But Abe's assassination could prompt stricter security at crowded events like campaigns, sports games and others.

During a parliamentary debate in 2015, Abe resisted suggestions by an opposition lawmaker to beef up his security, insisting that "Japan is a safe country."

In videos circulating on social media, the 41-year-old Yamagami can be seen standing only a few meters (yards) behind Abe across a busy street, and continuously glancing around.

A few minutes after Abe stood at the podium and started his speech — as a local party candidate and their supporters stood and waved to the crowd — Yamagami can be seen taking his gun out of a bag, walking toward Abe and firing the first shot, which released a cloud of smoke, but the projectile apparently missed Abe.

As Abe turned to see where the noise came from, a second shot went off. That bullet apparently hit Abe's left arm, missing a bulletproof briefcase raised by a security guard who stood behind him.

Abe fell to the ground, with his left arm tucked in as if to cover his chest. Campaign organizers shouted through loudspeakers asking for medical experts to provide first-aid to Abe. His heart and breathing had stopped by the time he was airlifted to a hospital, where he later pronounced dead.

Police on Saturday said autopsy results showed that a bullet that entered Abe's upper left arm damaged arteries beneath both collar bones, causing fatal massive bleeding.

According to the Asahi newspaper, Yamagami was a contract worker at a warehouse in Kyoto, operating a forklift. He was described as a quiet person who did not mingle with colleagues. A next-door neighbor at his apartment told Asahi he never met Yamagami, though he recalled hearing noises like a saw being used several times late at night over the past month.

Japan is particularly known for its strict gun laws. With a population of 125 million, it had only 10 gun-related criminal cases last year, eight of them gang-related.

Even though he was out of office, Abe was still highly influential in the governing Liberal Democratic Party and headed its largest faction. But his ultra-nationalist views made him a divisive figure to many.

Abe stepped down two years ago blaming a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis he'd had since he was a teenager. He said he regretted leaving many of his goals unfinished, especially his failure to resolve the issue of Japanese abducted years ago by North Korea, a territorial dispute with Russia, and a revision of Japan's war-renouncing constitution.

That ultra-nationalism riled the Koreans and China, and his push to create what he saw as a more normal defense posture angered many Japanese liberals. Abe failed to achieve his cherished goal of formally rewriting the U.S.-drafted pacifist constitution because of poor public support.

Loyalists said his legacy was a stronger U.S.-Japan relationship that was meant to bolster Japan's defense capability. Abe divided the public by forcing his defense goals and other contentious issues through parliament.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who early on had a frosty relationship with Abe, sent a condolence message to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Saturday, a day after most other world leaders issued their statements.

Xi credited Abe with making efforts to improve China-Japan relations and said he and Abe had reached

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an important understanding on building better ties, according to a statement posted on China's Foreign Ministry website. He also told Kishida he is willing to work with him to continue to develop neighborly and cooperative relations.

Abe was groomed to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. His political rhetoric often focused on making Japan a "normal" and "beautiful" nation with a stronger military through security alliance with the United States and bigger role in international affairs.

He became Japan's youngest prime minister in 2006, at age 52, but his overly nationalistic first stint abruptly ended a year later, also because of his health, prompting six years of annual leadership change.

He returned to office in 2012, vowing to revitalize the nation and getting its economy out of its deflationary doldrums with his "Abenomics" formula, which combines fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reforms. He won six national elections and built a rock-solid grip on power.

How a crowded GOP field could help Trump in 2024 campaign

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As Donald Trump considers another White House run, polls show he's the most popular figure in the Republican Party. But it wasn't always that way.

Competing at one point against a dozen rivals for the presidential nomination in 2016, Trump won only about one-third of the vote in key early states. He even lost in Iowa, which kicks off the nomination process.

But he prevailed because those in the party who opposed his brand of divisive politics were never able to coalesce around a single rival. That same dynamic could repeat itself as Trump mulls a new bid for the presidency as soon as this summer.

With a growing list of candidates gearing up to run, even a Trump diminished by two impeachments and mounting legal vulnerabilities could hold a commanding position in a fractured, multi-candidate primary.

"I fear it could end up the same way as 2016, which basically was everyone thought everyone else should get out," said Republican strategist Mike DuHaime, who advised former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's campaign that year. "I think every major candidate realized that he or she would have a better shot against Trump one-on-one. But of course each person thought he or she should be the one to get that shot and nobody got out of the way. ... And then it was too late."

The anxiety is mounting as a growing list of potential rivals take increasingly brazen steps, delivering high-profile speeches, running ads, courting donors and making repeat visits to early voting states.

That group now includes upward of a dozen could-be-candidates, including Trump's former vice president, Mike Pence; his former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo; and Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas, Tom Cotton of Arkansas, Rick Scott of Florida and Tim Scott of South Carolina. All could run on the former president's policies.

In the anti-Trump lane, politicians such as Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming and Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan are raising their profiles.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is increasingly seen as Trump's heir apparent, even by Trump's most loyal supporters, and viewed by Trump allies as his most formidable potential challenger.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and others have said they will not challenge Trump if he does go forward. But others, including Christie, seem to be gunning for the fight, even if they seem to be long shots.

"I'm definitely giving it serious thought. I'm not gonna make any decision probably until the end of the year," Christie said in a recent interview. He has urged the party to move on from Trump and his ongoing obsession with the 2020 election.

"For me, it's about the party needing to go in in a new direction from a personality perspective, and to continue to have someone who can bring strong leadership, tough leadership, that the country needs, but doesn't have all of the other drama that goes along with it," he said. "I'm hearing the same things from donors that I'm hearing from voters — that they're very concerned that we can't put ourselves in a position to have 2024 be about anything but the good of the country."

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Pompeo, who has had a busy travel schedule and plans to return to Iowa this summer, said in a recent interview that he has been spending time reading and listening to President Ronald Reagan's speeches as he prepares for a possible run.

"We're getting ready to stay in the fight," he said last month as he courted evangelical Christians at a gathering in Nashville, Tennessee.

He said he and his wife would sit down after the November elections and "think our way through it, pray our way through it, and decide where's best to serve. It could be presenting ourselves for elected office again. We may choose a different path. But we're not gonna walk away from these things that I've been working on for 30 years now. They matter too much."

Pompeo sketched out a possible approach in much the same mold as Trump.

"He was a disruptor that was most necessary in 2016, there's no doubt about that," Pompeo said. And now the task is to take those set of understandings, those set of principles, and defend them and build upon them. And it's gonna take a lot of work to do that, leaders of real fortitude and character to do that."

Such open talk comes as Trump faces a cascade of escalating legal troubles.

The congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection has revealed increasingly damaging information about Trump's final weeks in office. The Department of Justice has its own investigation. In Georgia, the prosecutor investigating Trump's potentially illegal meddling in the state's 2020 election has stepped up her inquiry by subpoenaing members of Trump's inner circle. In New York, Trump, his namesake son and his daughter Ivanka have agreed to answer questions under oath beginning next week in the state attorney general's civil investigation into his business practices.

Mick Mulvaney, a former South Carolina congressman who served as Trump's acting White House chief of staff, said the moves suggested potential candidates "might see an opening where none existed two months ago."

"Trump fatigue might be a real thing," he said, with voters asking themselves whether, if they vote for another candidate, they "can get the same policies without all the baggage."

At the same time, Trump has seen some of his endorsed primary candidates falter. Those who have won, including Senate hopefuls JD Vance in Ohio and Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania, have done so with about 30% of the vote, meaning that two-thirds of party voters went against Trump's picks.

"I don't think anybody underestimates Trump. There's a reason he's the most sought-after endorsement in every single Republican primary," said GOP strategist Alex Conant. "That said, I think there's a recognition that a lot of Republican voters are looking to the future and ready for what's next."

To what extent remains an open question. During a trip to Iowa this week, Cotton declined to weigh in on Trump's standing. But the senator said he hoped to be "an effective national leader, not only for my party but for the American people in my role in the Senate and any other future role I might serve."

Still, Cotton argued, candidates should embrace Trump's legacy.

"I know that Donald Trump is very popular among our voters who appreciate the successes he delivered for four years in a very hostile environment. They don't want Republicans who are running against that legacy, because they view that legacy as a great success," he said Thursday in Cambridge, Iowa.

Trump continues to move forward with his own events.

On Friday night, he campaigned in Las Vegas alongside Adam Laxalt, his pick for Nevada Senate. And on Saturday night, he planned a rally in Anchorage, Alaska, to campaign with Kelly Tshibaka, whom he has endorsed in her race against Sen. Lisa Murkowski, and others, including former Gov. Sarah Palin, now running for Congress.

Conant said it made sense for candidates to continue testing the waters for now.

"A lot of potential candidates are realizing that 2024 may be their last best chance, regardless of what Trump does," he said. "There's a very vulnerable Democrat in the White House, Republicans seem likely to win, and if it's not Trump, they're basically sidelined for the next 10 years."

Still, Conant, who served as communications director to Florida Sen. Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential bid, noted the similarities.

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"It looks like it's increasingly clear there's going to be a lot of people running for president. And while I think there's an appetite for something different, the alternative to Trump needs to coalesce around one candidate," he said. "That never happened in 2016. And it might not happen in 2024."

4 days in January: Trump push for Capitol coda to 2020 vote

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — It would have been something never quite before seen in America — a defeated president, Donald Trump, standing at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, with a mob of supporters, some armed, contesting the election outcome.

Trump intended to go there that day. His allies had been planning for the moment, envisioning the president delivering a speech outside the building or even entering the House chamber amid objections to Congress certifying the 2020 election results for Democrat Joe Biden.

"He's going to look powerful," mused Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani to a young White House aide four days earlier.

But White House lawyers thought it was a "terrible" idea. Counsel Pat Cipollone warned that Trump could be charged with "every crime imaginable" if he joined mob on Capitol Hill trying to interfere with the certification.

In the end, Trump never made it to the Capitol on Jan. 6. His security refused to take him as rioters, some with weapons, laid siege to the building.

Furious, and stuck at the White House, Trump watched the insurrection on television.

The Jan. 6 hearings are providing dramatic new insight about Trump's intentions as he told loyalists he would join them on a march down Pennsylvania Avenue to "fight like hell" for his presidency. This account is drawn largely from the testimony of former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson. Her recollections from her close proximity to the president and his inner circle suggest Trump's demands were not the brash desires of an impulsive commander in chief but part of his last-ditch plan for stopping Biden's victory.

Trump and his allies quickly disputed Hutchinson's account, and the former president conducted his own interview days later disparaging her with derisive commentary and nicknames.

This coming week, the committee is set to focus on Trump's own actions and those of the extremist Oath Keepers and Proud Boys in allegedly leading the Capitol attack.

A look at what's known about Trump's plans to join the mob on Jan. 6:

JAN. 2

It was a Saturday night. Giuliani had been meeting at the White House with Trump's chief of staff, Mark Meadows, and others.

The White House and Meadows had placed some 18 calls that day to Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's secretary of state, before Trump finally got the elections official on the phone.

Trump had been disputing the election results in Georgia, which he narrowly lost. He was demanding that Raffensperger "find 11,780 votes," exactly enough to tip the balance from Biden's victory. The engineer-turned-civil servant declined.

As Giuliani left the White House that night, he walked out with Meadows' young aide, Hutchinson, a senior adviser.

"Cass, are you excited for the 6th?" Giuliani asked, as Hutchinson recalled in testimony before the Jan. 6 committee. "It's going to be a great day."

Hutchinson had heard discussions about Jan. 6 and the rally being planned outside the White House as Congress was set to certify the election results. She also had heard, when Giuliani was around, mentions of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, two extremist groups.

She looked at Giuliani and asked him to explain.

"We're going to the Capitol," Giuliani told her. "It's going to be great. The president's going to be there. He's going to look powerful."

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JAN. 3

On Sunday, Cipollone privately raised concerns to Hutchinson about the president's planned trip to the Capitol.

Cipollone told her there were "serious legal concerns" if Trump went ahead as Congress was certifying the election. He urged her to relay the concerns to her boss, Meadows.

"We need to make sure that this doesn't happen," Cipollone said, according to Hutchinson's testimony. "This would be a legally a terrible idea for us. We're — we have serious legal concerns if we go up to the Capitol that day."

That Sunday was a busy day at the White House.

The leaders of Trump's Justice Department were threatening to resign if the president replaced the acting attorney general, Jeffrey Rosen, with a lower-ranked civil division head, Jeffrey Clark, to pursue the electoral challenge.

And that same day, the U.S. Capitol Police issued a special event assessment, noting that the Proud Boys and other groups planned to be in Washington on Jan. 6.

The police assessment indicated that "unlike previous post-election protests, the targets of the pro-Trump supporters are not necessarily the counter-protesters... but rather Congress itself is the target on the 6th."

JAN. 5

On Tuesday, the eve of Jan. 6, according to Hutchinson, Trump asked Meadows to be in touch with two of the president's associates — Roger Stone and Michael Flynn.

Stone attended rallies for Trump in Washington and was photographed with multiple members of the Oath Keepers who were allegedly serving as his security detail, according to the committee. Both Stone and Flynn invoked their Fifth Amendment rights rather than testify before the committee.

The big "Stop the Steal" rally was planned for the morning of Jan. 6 near the White House. Meadows spoke with both Stone and Flynn that evening, Hutchinson said. Stone has disputed her account.

Meadows also sought to join Giuliani and others who had set up a "war room" at the Willard Hotel close to the White House, she testified.

"I had made it clear to Mr. Meadows that I didn't believe it was a smart idea for him to go to the Willard Hotel that night," she said.

JAN. 6: THE RALLY

The morning of the rally on Wednesday, Jan. 6, Cipollone pleaded once again with Hutchinson to ensure Trump did not head to the Capitol.

"Please," he said, "make sure we don't go up to the Capitol, Cassidy," she recalled. "We're going to get charged with every crime imaginable if we make that movement happen."

Hutchinson's desk at the White House was just down the hall from the Oval Office, which was in one corner, and her boss Meadows' office in the other. But that day she was with the president backstage as he surveyed the crowd of supporters outside the White House.

Trump was furious.

The crowd was not as full as Trump wanted it. Supporters lingered outside the security screening, unwilling to have their weapons confiscated by the Secret Service to join the main rally area.

Trump ordered his security to get rid of the metal detectors, known as magnetometers, insisting the armed supporters were no threat to him.

The police radios crackled with information; a man in the trees with a rifle or another with a handgun at his waist; three men with an AR-15 walking at 14th Street and Independence Avenue.

Trump has disputed Hutchinson's account. "I didn't want guns," he said in an interview with Newsmax that aired two days after the hearing.

But Hutchinson had recounted to the committee what she heard.

"They're not here to hurt me," Trump told his staff, Hutchinson recalled. "Let them in. Let my people in."

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They can march to the Capitol after the rally's over. Take the effing mags away. Then they can march to the Capitol."

JAN. 6: THE SPEECH

The president took the stage at the "Stop the Steal" rally complaining about the election outcome and the need to stop Biden from becoming president.

"We're going to walk down, and I'll be there with you," Trump said to the thousand of supporters at the grassy Ellipse.

"We're going to walk down to the Capitol," Trump said. "You'll never take back our country with weakness; you have to show strength."

Many people had already started peeling off toward the Capitol, and Trump encouraged the crowd to go.

"I know that everyone here will soon be marching over to the Capitol building to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard," he said. "Let's walk down Pennsylvania Avenue."

A White House security log, revealed by the Jan. 6 committee, shows the scramble that was underway for Trump to go to the Capitol as well.

"MilAide has confirmed that he wants to walk," said one entry on the National Security Council chat.

"They are begging him to reconsider," reads another.

The next entry was a discussion of the "current route" for Trump's motorcade to take 15th Street, to F Street, to 6th Street, to Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol.

"So this is happening," reads another entry.

Hutchinson was still in the tent behind the rally stage when she got a phone call from House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California.

McCarthy sounded rushed, frustrated and angry, she said. "You told me this whole week you aren't coming up here. Why would you lie to me?" he asked Hutchinson, a former House aide.

"I'm not lying. I wasn't lying to you, sir," she replied. And McCarthy said, "Well, he just said it on stage, Cassidy. Figure it out. Don't come up here."

The mob was breaking past the security fencing around the Capitol.

"Capitol Police are reporting multiple breaches," the security log reads. "Capitol is now calling for all available to respond."

JAN. 6: BEHIND THE WHEEL

Trump climbed into the presidential SUV determined to be taken to the Capitol, Hutchinson recalled.

The Secret Service now disputes her account, as does Trump. But Hutchinson testified under oath that she was told later by Anthony Ornato, the deputy chief of staff for White House operations, that Trump was irate.

"The president said something to the effect of, 'I'm the effing president, take me up to the Capitol now,'" she recalled.

When the driver, Bobby Engel, responded, "Sir, we have to go back to the West Wing" Trump grabbed at the steering wheel, and lunged at the driver's "clavicles," she said.

Trump never made it to the Capitol. His motorcade headed back to the White House.

In the Newsmax interview, Trump dismissed the idea that he tried to "commandeer" the car to go to the Capitol as "totally false." He marveled at the "incredible size" of the crowd — one of the biggest, he said, he has ever attracted. But he did not dispute wanting to go to the Capitol that day.

"I wanted to go so badly," he said during an April interview with the Washington Post.

At the hearing, the security log made clear just how close Trump came to creating that unseen image — a defeated president standing with the mob as an armed insurrection was laying siege to the Capitol.

"Looks like he is coming home for now," the security log stated.

Weak protection for vanishing whale violates law, judge says

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By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The federal government hasn't done enough to protect a rare species of whale from lethal entanglement in lobster fishing gear, and new rules are needed to protect the species from extinction, a judge has ruled.

The government has violated both the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act by failing to protect the North Atlantic right whale, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg ruled on Friday. The whales number less than 340 in the world and have been declining rapidly in population in recent years.

Boasberg's ruling was a victory for conservation groups that have long sought to save the whale and a new challenge for lobster fishermen who have fought back against tightening restrictions on where and how they can fish. Boasberg ruled that the court's findings "do not dictate that it must immediately shutter the American lobster fishery," but instead said the parties must propose potential remedies to the threat faced by whales.

The ruling "may seem a severe result for the lobster industry" and the government, but no one "operates free from the strict requirements imposed by the MMPA and ESA," Boasberg wrote.

Environmental groups celebrated the ruling, while some members of the fishing industry took a more measured approach.

The ruling came after a group of environmental organizations sued the federal government with a complaint that it wasn't doing enough to save whales from lobster gear. Boasberg's ruling validates that claim, said Kristen Monsell, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the groups that sued.

"Lobster gear is a deadly threat to right whales, and the courts are telling the federal government to quit stalling and start taking real action. The Biden administration has to work much harder to help the industry prevent these agonizing, deadly entanglements," Monsell said.

The Maine Lobstermen's Association, the largest fishing trade group on the East Coast, said in a statement that it was still reviewing the ruling. The association also pointed to a section of Boasberg's ruling that said the National Marine Fisheries Service "may find that other measures exist to reduce lethal take, or that projected take is in fact lower than originally estimated." That renders the ruling "a mixed bag," the association said.

"We are heartened that the court recognizes the great importance of Maine's lobstering heritage and appreciates the potential and unnecessary harm that could be imposed on the men and women who work so hard to make our industry thrive," said Patrice McCarron, executive director of the Maine Lobstermen's Association.

The right whales give birth off Florida and Georgia and come north to the waters off New England and Canada to feed. They're also imperiled by lethal collisions with ships, and federal authorities are expected to soon release new guidelines to help protect them from that threat.

The whales were once numerous, but they were decimated during the commercial whaling era. Some scientists have said warming ocean temperatures are causing them to stray from protected areas in search of food, and that has left them more vulnerable to collisions and entanglement.

For EU, Johnson exit won't change much; damage already done

By RAF CASERT and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — From his days stoking anti-European Union sentiment with exaggerated newspaper stories, to his populist campaign leading Britain out of the bloc and reneging on the post-Brexit trade deal he signed, outgoing U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been the bane of Brussels for all so many years.

Such was his impact on breaking the bonds between Britain and the EU that after Johnson was forced to announce Thursday that he would step down, the news brought little public jubilation in EU circles. Instead, there was just the numb acceptance of the inevitable and resignation that things will never be the same.

"I will not miss him," French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said, highlighting an open disdain unseen since the Europeans welcomed the U.S. election loss of Donald Trump in 2020. And while trans-Atlantic relations picked up quickly since the arrival of President Joe Biden, don't expect anything similar with a

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new British leader, politicians and experts said.

"Even with a new prime minister, I believe there will likely be few changes in the British government's position" on the main Brexit issues causing current divisions, said David McAllister, the leading EU legislator dealing with the United Kingdom.

Guy Verhofstadt, who was the top EU parliamentarian during the whole Brexit divorce proceedings, said Johnson's impact was such there is little to no chance another Conservative prime minister could steer a fundamentally different course.

"No one is under any illusion that Johnson's departure from Downing Street solves any of the underlying problems in the U.K.-EU relationship," Verhofstadt wrote in an opinion piece for The Guardian. "The damage done by the outgoing prime minister, through the project that he instrumentalized to achieve power, lives on."

The United Kingdom was always a halfhearted EU member since joining the bloc in 1973. When Johnson joined the Brussels press corps some three decades ago, he often enthralled his home readership with stories that had two fundamental elements: they put the EU in the darkest of lights, and they had little connection to reality.

As a Conservative politician, he threw his weight in the 2016 referendum on the U.K.'s EU membership behind arguments to leave the bloc. Johnson used his breezy manner and jokey style to sell the benefits of withdrawing from the EU, sometimes disregarding the facts. He was key to the Brexit campaign's victory in the cliff-edge 2016 Brexit referendum vote.

Yet disdain never ran deeper than earlier this year when he started moves toward unilaterally rewriting parts of the post-Brexit deal he signed with the 27-nation bloc. The agreement set up a special system in Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K., so trade with the Republic of Ireland — an EU member — could go on without setting up a physical border.

"I was there face to face with him. Line for line, comma for comma, and he doesn't want to respect it," EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier reminisced Friday, still showing bafflement at Johnson's tactics.

"The reputational damage has been huge to a country and society which has long been proud of its deep culture of 'My word is my bond' without even a written contract, let alone an international treaty," said Michael Emerson of the Center for European Policy Studies.

The bill to unilaterally break the agreement on trade in Northern Ireland is still in the House of Commons, and some lingering hope is left that London might step back from the brink.

"They have this law in the Parliament, so they are doing steps in that direction. But they have not crossed the line," said Jan Lipavský, the foreign minister of Czechia, which holds the EU presidency and is more widely known in English as the Czech Republic.

Yet a quick glance at the likely contenders to take over doesn't inspire hope for any fundamental change since it includes several Conservatives who have spent years steeping in Johnson's confrontational Brexit strategies.

"If you look at possible successors, there is no one who will fundamentally break with the Brexit line," said Rem Korteweg of the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, Netherlands. "The Conservative Party has a dominant Brexit core that you will have to convince to become prime minister."

Although the first years of Brexit have yielded anything but the bounty Johnson promised, any possible quest to return the U.K. to the EU is also as good as out of the question, with the main opposition Labour Party now centering to make the best of the Brexit situation instead.

Not that the EU would even want to welcome back the country with open arms.

With Ukraine, inflation-spurred economic issues and migration problems, "their plate is full," Korteweg said. "They are really not waiting for talks with the British, who will be looking for exceptions and exemptions anyway," he said.

Barnier, who led the EU in Brexit talks for years, doesn't see it happening either.

"It is not an issue at hand," Barnier said on Sud Radio. "Very frankly, what we need is a state of mind where the British government respects the treaties it negotiated."

On Greece's Santorini, 13 cloistered nuns pray for the world

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

THIRA, Greece (AP) — Cruise-ship tourists crowding souvenir shops and couples chasing the perfect Instagram sunset through the alleyway outside the Monastery of St. Catherine, steps from Santorini's world-famous volcanic cliffs.

Inside this convent on one of the trendiest islands in Greece, a predominantly Christian Orthodox country, 13 cloistered Catholic nuns devote their lives to praying for those visitors and for the world.

It's a crucial if often misunderstood mission within the church, where constant prayer is deemed necessary to support more outwardly engaged ministries.

"In such a touristy island, the last thing one thinks about is praying — so we are the ones who do it," Sister Lucía María de Fátima, the prioress, said on a recent morning.

She and other sisters spoke in the convent's parlor, from behind a widely spaced white iron grille that demarcates the cloistered space from the outside world. Ending more than two years of pandemic seclusion, the sisters will welcome visitors back to the public part of their church starting at a Mass in early August for the convent's 425th anniversary.

The rest of the convent is considered a sacred space, where the nuns live mostly in silence and contemplation, leaving only for medical reasons or government requirements.

"After going beyond the grille, we miss nothing. When God gave us the vocation to being cloistered, he gave us the complete package," said Sister María Esclava, who's originally from Puerto Rico.

The Rev. Félix del Valle, a Spanish priest, has led periodic spiritual exercises at the convent for more than 10 years, part of the rigorous religious training for the sisters that starts with nine years of preparation before entering the cloistered life.

"In a world of consumption, of diversions, they give witness that God alone is enough," he said.

Many orders of nuns are active in teaching, health care and ministry to vulnerable groups like migrants. But contemplative nuns carry on a tradition of complete devotion to prayer that traces its origins to the first desert hermits, who sought closeness to God by removing all earthly distractions.

"For these women, they find God in a dedicated life of prayer or contemplation," said Margaret McGuinness, professor emerita of religion at La Salle University in Philadelphia.

Sister María de la Iglesia spent nearly 40 years in Santorini before moving to Spain to lead the Federación Madre de Dios, or Mother of God Federation, which oversees the island's convent and nine other Catholic Dominican convents on four continents.

"In today's logic our life is not understood or valued, but within the church it is," she said. "We're the voice of the church that tirelessly praises, petitions on behalf of our entire humanity. It's a thrilling mission."

When not praying or practicing music and hymns, the sisters — ranging in age from 40s to 80s — do housework; tend to the garden, where they grow tomatoes, lemons and grapes; and make communion wafers for most of the Catholic parishes in Greece.

During two daily recesses, they break their silence to chat on the wide terraces, the Aegean Sea shimmering in the distance.

At dawn, a bell calls to the first of about nine hours of prayer, most sung in Latin, Spanish and Greek.

"While the sun rises, creation and the human person join in harmony of praise to God," Sister María Guadalupe said, adding that with monasteries across time zones, someone is always keeping prayer active. "We're not out of the world, but rather very involved in the world."

In majority-Orthodox Greece, the Catholic convent's presence speaks to desired unity with other Christians, the sisters say. They exchange holiday greetings with the island's Orthodox monks and nuns, and recall enthusiastically one visit when they sang hymns together.

"Despite being cloistered, nuns have always been an important element in the life of a place," said Fermín Labarga, professor of church history at the University of Navarra in Spain.

It was in that country that the Dominican order of cloistered nuns was founded more than 800 years ago by St. Dominic, to pray constantly in what Labarga termed the "rearguard" while their fellow religious

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brought the Gospel to the world.

That "missionary spirit within a contemplative space," in Sister María de la Iglesia's words, continues to animate today's nuns, who wear the historic Dominican black veil and all-enveloping white habit — representing penitence and innocence. They came to Santorini mostly from the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo), as well as Angola, Korea, Argentina, Greece and Spain.

Sister María de la Iglesia was sent to the island by her order in 1981, when only three nuns were left in the convent.

It was first established in 1596 on the rocky promontory of Skaros — today a popular sunset-watching spot, but then a hideout from pirates. After an earthquake, it was relocated to the main town of Thira a few miles away, where it survived another devastating quake in 1956 that led many residents, including most other Catholic religious, to abandon the island.

Large rocks are embedded in the artistic grille that divides the church's public area from where the sisters pray, near a globe that further symbolizes their connection to their surroundings.

The sisters keep up to date on world events through various Catholic media outlets and newsletters, plus daily Mass homilies. In recent ones, the priest delved into the war in Ukraine, the metaverse and the dangers of parkour.

They also receive prayer petitions from other religious as well as visitors, asking for everything from world peace to healing from disease — "and babies, lots of babies," Sister Maria Flor de la Eucaristía said playfully.

"We suffer too with them, we feel the pain of the families and of the world, but with a certitude of hope that gives us joy," said Sister Maria Fátima, who hails from Angola.

That certainty of belief shines through the sisters' cheerful demeanor despite an austere life that demands sacrifice not only from them but from their families, whom they can only see occasionally behind the grilles.

"It's a calling from God. You can't follow any other path. A constant call, so that you can follow it with joy," said Sister Lucía María de Fátima, originally from Argentina.

That joy they find plentifully in their vocation, despite forgoing most activities that draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to Santorini — like going to the beach.

Sister María Isabel said she liked beaches a lot in her native Puerto Rico. Upon entering the Dominican convent there, she could no longer see the ocean.

When she was moved to the main convent in Olmedo, deep in Spain's heartland, she thought she would never see a wave again. Then came the mission in Santorini.

"God gives you grace that you had not expected," she said, smiling broadly, before the bell tolled, and she rushed off to church, to keep singing God's praise.

UK defense minister rules himself out of leadership race

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A British Cabinet minister tipped to be a frontrunner in the Conservative Party's leadership race ruled himself out of the contest Saturday.

Defense Minister Ben Wallace said after "careful consideration" and discussion with colleagues and family, he will not be running to replace Boris Johnson as Conservative leader and the country's next prime minister.

Wallace was seen by some as the favorite choice among Conservative party members in what's shaping up to be a wide open leadership race following Johnson's resignation announcement on Thursday.

Johnson quit as party leader after months of insisting he would stay in the job despite mounting ethics scandals. He said he would stay on as prime minister until the party chooses his successor.

Newly-appointed Treasury chief Nadhim Zahawi launched his campaign to become Tory leader Saturday, pledging to lower taxes and boost defense spending.

Zahawi's announcement came a day after former chancellor Rishi Sunak, the best-known of the leadership contenders and regarded as the bookmakers' favorite to win, launched his bid. Sunak resigned on

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Tuesday, kicking off a mass exodus of government officials that toppled Johnson.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, Attorney General Suella Braverman, lawmaker Tom Tugendhat and former equalities minister Kemi Badenoch have also thrown their hat into the ring, and more announcements are expected over the coming days.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and trade minister Penny Mordaunt are widely expected to run, as are former health secretaries Sajid Javid and Jeremy Hunt.

Wallace said his decision wasn't "an easy choice to make, but my focus is on my current job and keeping this great country safe."

Conservative party officials on Monday are expected to set out the timetable for a leadership contest, with the aim of having a winner by the end of the summer. The two-step process involves Tory lawmakers voting to reduce the field of candidates to two, who will then go to a ballot of all party members — about 180,000 people.

The winner of the vote will become both the leader of the Conservative party and Britain's next prime minister, without the need for a national election.

Johnson's resignation marked the end of three tumultuous years that saw the divisive leader fend off numerous scandals and a Conservative leadership challenge. For months, he managed to cling on to power despite allegations that he protected supporters from bullying and corruption allegations, and that he misled Parliament about government office parties that broke COVID-19 lockdown rules.

But his handling of allegations about a senior politician who had been accused of sexual misconduct proved the last straw for many Conservatives, who this week openly revolted and forced him out of office.

Johnson remains in office to head a caretaker administration, but many Conservatives don't want a lame-duck leader — especially amid a worsening cost-of-living crisis triggered by soaring food and energy prices.

Today in History: July 10, the Battle of Britain begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, July 10, the 191st day of 2022. There are 174 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 10, 1940, during World War II, the Battle of Britain began as the Luftwaffe started attacking southern England. (The Royal Air Force was ultimately victorious.)

On this date:

In 1509, theologian John Calvin, a key figure of the Protestant Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, France.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson personally delivered the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') to the Senate and urged its ratification. (However, the Senate rejected it.)

In 1925, jury selection took place in Dayton, Tennessee, in the trial of John T. Scopes, charged with violating the law by teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (Scopes was convicted and fined, but the verdict was overturned on a technicality.)

In 1929, American paper currency was reduced in size as the government began issuing bills that were approximately 25 percent smaller.

In 1951, armistice talks aimed at ending the Korean War began at Kaesong.

In 1985, the Greenpeace protest ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk with explosives in Auckland, New Zealand, by French intelligence agents; one activist was killed.

In 1991, Boris N. Yeltsin took the oath of office as the first elected president of the Russian republic. President George H.W. Bush lifted economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 2002, the House approved, 310-113, a measure to allow airline pilots to carry guns in the cockpit to defend their planes against terrorists (President George W. Bush later signed the measure into law).

In 2005, a search-and-rescue team found the body of a missing U.S. commando in eastern Afghanistan, bringing an end to the desperate search for the last member of an ill-fated, four-man special forces unit

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that had disappeared the previous month.

In 2015, to the cheers of thousands, South Carolina pulled the Confederate flag from its place of honor at the Statehouse after more than 50 years.

In 2018, a daring rescue mission in Thailand was completed successfully, as the last four of the 12 boys who were trapped in a flooded cave for more than two weeks were brought to safety along with their soccer coach; the other eight had been brought out in the two preceding days.

In 2020, President Donald Trump commuted the sentence of his longtime political confidant Roger Stone, intervening in extraordinary fashion in a criminal case that was central to the Russia investigation and concerned Trump's own conduct; the move came days before Stone was to begin serving a 40-month sentence for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump's 2016 campaign had colluded with Russia.

Ten years ago: Clashing over the economy, President Barack Obama challenged Mitt Romney to join him in allowing tax hikes for rich Americans like them; Romney dismissed the idea and redirected charges that he, Romney, had sent jobs overseas when he worked in private equity, calling Obama the real "outsourcer-in-chief." An Israeli court cleared former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of the central charges in a multi-case corruption trial that forced him from power, but convicted him of a lesser charge of breach of trust, for which Olmert received a suspended one-year jail sentence. The National League romped to an 8-0 victory over the American League in the All-Star game.

Five years ago: Donald Trump Jr. acknowledged that he agreed to meet with a Russian lawyer during his father's presidential campaign in the hope that he would receive information about Democrat Hillary Clinton. Fifteen Marines and a Navy corpsman were killed in the crash of a Marine Corps refueling and cargo plane in a soybean field in Mississippi.

One year ago: A statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was hoisted off its stone pedestal in Charlottesville, Virginia and hauled away to storage along with a statue of Confederate Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson; the Lee monument had become a rallying cry for white supremacists, leading to a deadly 2017 rally in which a peaceful counterprotester was killed. Ash Barty won Wimbledon for her second Grand Slam title, holding off a comeback bid by Karolina Pliskova to win 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-3; she was the first Australian woman to capture Wimbledon since Evonne Goolagong in 1980.

Today's Birthdays: Actor William Smithers is 95. Actor Lawrence Pressman is 83. Singer Mavis Staples is 83. Actor Mills Watson is 82. Actor Robert Pine is 81. Rock musician Jerry Miller (Moby Grape) is 79. International Tennis Hall of Famer Virginia Wade is 77. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie is 75. Rock musician Dave Smalley is 73. Country-folk singer-songwriter Cheryl Wheeler is 71. Rock singer Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) is 68. Banjo player Bela Fleck is 64. Actor Fiona Shaw is 64. Bluegrass singer-musician Tim Surratt (Balsam Range) is 59. Actor Alec Mapa is 57. Country singer-songwriter Ken Mellons is 57. Rock musician Peter DiStefano (Porno for Pyros) is 57. Actor Gale Harold is 53. Country singer Gary LeVox (leh-VOH') (Rascal Flatts) is 52. Actor Aaron D. Spears is 51. Actor Sofia Vergara is 50. Rockabilly singer Imelda May is 48. Actor Adrian Grenier (grehn-YAY') is 46. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (CHOO'-ih-tehl EHJ'-ee-oh-for) is 45. Actor Gwendoline Yeo is 45. Actor Thomas Ian Nicholas is 42. Singer-actor Jessica Simpson is 42. Actor Heather Hemmens is 38. Actor Emily Skeggs (TV: "When We Rise") is 32. Rapper/singer Angel Haze is 31. Pop singer Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) is 29.