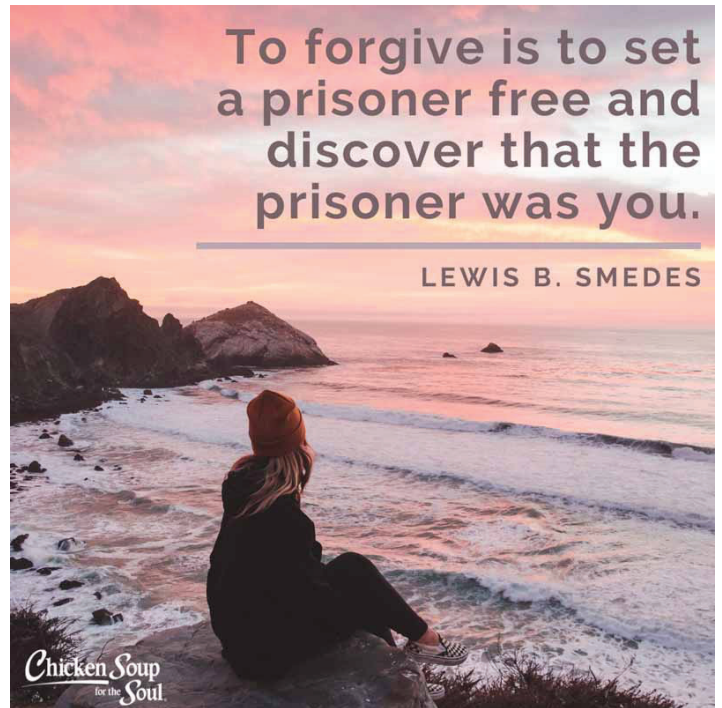


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bread.

Junior Fall Planning Day and Career Expo at NSU  
1:30 p.m.: Parent/Teacher Conferences - School dismisses at 1:15 p.m.

4 p.m.: Cross Country at Sisseton Golf Course  
UMC: Bible Study with Ashley, 6:30 p.m.

## Friday, Sept. 30

Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzine, mixed vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

No School - Faculty Inservice

7 p.m.: Football hosts Webster Area  
Pre-School Screening, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

## Saturday, Oct. 1

Youth Football at Waubay Jamboree  
1 p.m.: Girls Soccer hosts Garretson  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Pumpkin Fest at City Park  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 209 N Main.

**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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## Wednesday, Sept. 28

NATIONAL GOOD NEIGHBOR DAY!

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Super nachos.

Senior Menu: Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

9:30 a.m.: Aberdeen Roncalli Marching Festival

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club and Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

UMC: Community Coffee Hour at 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation Snack at 3:30 p.m. with confirmation at 4 p.m.

Emmanuel: 6 p.m.: 7th and 8th grade confirmation; League at 6:30 p.m.

## Thursday, Sept. 29

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken sandwich, sweet potato puffs.

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruited Jell-O, whole wheat

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

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## SDFBCA Coaches Poll

### 11AAA

SF Jefferson 164 (32)  
O'Gorman 126 (1)  
Harrisburg 104  
Brandon Valley 53  
SF Lincoln 31  
RV: SF Washington 14

### 11AA

Pierre 154 (30)  
Tea Area 125 (1)  
Yankton 83  
Brookings 73  
Aberdeen Central 18  
RV: Spearfish 5, Sturgis 4

### 11A

Dell Rapids 142 (19)  
West Central 135 (14)  
Beresford 68  
Tie: Dakota Valley, SF Christian 38  
RV: Canton 36, Lennox 8

### 11B

Winner 136 (21)  
EPJ 116 (6)  
BEE 60 (1)  
Aberdeen Roncalli 54 (3)  
MVP 54  
RV: MCM 19

### 9AA

1. Howard (17) 118 6-0  
2. Wall (6) 90 6-0  
3. Hamlin (4) 79 6-0  
4. Hanson 52 4-1  
5. Elkton-Lake Benton 27 6-0  
RV: Parkston 26 5-1, Bon Homme 8 4-1, Viborg-Hurley 2 4-2

### 9A

1. Gregory (17) 123 5-0  
2. Warner (9) 107 5-0  
3. Alcester-Hudson 53 6-0  
4. Castlewood 49 4-1  
5. Lyman 26 4-1  
RV: Harding Co/Bison 17 5-1, Canistota 13 2-4, Wolsley-Wessington 10 3-2, Timber Lake (1) 7 4-2

### 9B

1. Herreid/Selby Area (23) 127 5-0  
2. Hitchcock-Tulare (2) 98 6-0  
3. Sully Buttes 38 5-1  
3. De Smet 38 3-2  
5. Corsica-Stickney 34 5-1  
RV: Kadoka Area 17 3-2, Faith 13 5-1, Avon 9 3-3

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## ANOTHER JARK/WORLIE AUCTION



## RETIREMENT CEMENT TOOLS & EQUIPMENT AUCTION

**Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022**  
**Sale Time: 10:00 AM**

**507 E. RR Ave, Groton, SD**



### SKID STEER – WHEEL LOADER

• Mustang 2056 Turbo w/2 speed Cab, AC/Heat, Hydr. Tach, 6' Bucket, 2302 hours, ('10) • 5' Mustang Skid Steer Bucket (cement) • Kobelco LK300A Wheel Loader w/Bucket, Forks, 16.9-24 Tires, Eng. Overhauled 4084 hrs ago (\$23,000)– Runs/Works.

### GUN SAFE - TOOLS – EQUIP – TANKS

- Safari 24 Gun Safe (NIB)
- Husqvarna FS309 Cement Saw -Nice
- Subaru Robin Ex17 Cement Saw
- DP-75ASB Diesel Generator (New)
- Wen 5500 Generator (New)!
- Screeds w/Honda & B&S Motors
- BNT-40 14.4v Lithium Rebar Cutter
- Honda Drive Motor w/Vibrating Cable & Water Pump
- Impala 30 ton Hydr. Press
- Mikasa MVC-88GH Packer (Honda)
- Wacker VPA1750 Packer (Honda)
- Wacker Power Float (Honda)
- DeWalt & Jet Table Saws
- Insulated Concrete Blankets
- 8 Sets of Scaffolding
- Bosch Elec. Jack Hammer
- Stihl TS 400 & TS 500 Cement Saws
- Weldmark 135+ Welder
- DP Air Compressor
- Older Floats, Packers & Screeds
- Hammer Drills
- Hand Tools, Trowels, Air Hose Reel
- 5/8" Rod (4', 8', 20')
- 4) 6"x6"x15' St. Tubes (1/4")
- 90) 4x8 Wall Forms
- 4' & 8' Corner Forms
- Newer 2' Forms
- Stakes & Wire Ties
- 2x4's, 2x6's, 2x10's,
- Several 2x12's (15' & 20')
- 500 gal. Propane Tank (needs valve)
- 500 gal. Diesel Tank (1/2 full)
- Lots of Hand Tools

### TRACTOR – LOADER – SNOWMOBILE

Case IH 50 CVT FWA Tractor w/L350 Loader, Bucket, Forks, 3 pt, PTO, 2 Hydr, 575 hours! • Case IH BS172H 6' Snow Blower (Nice) • Case IH TLX180H 80" 3 pt. Tiller • Farm King 847 7' Leveler • Fimco 3 pt. Sprayer w/ 50 gal. Tank, Folding Booms • King Kutter 3 pt. 6' Disk • Field Svc Tank • '08 Polaris RMK 700 Snowmobile w/155" Track/ 2 1/4" Lugs (all consigned)



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## Tigers battle tough with Florence-Henry

Groton Area's volleyball team played with high intensity and it showed in the first set against Florence-Henry, which is 14-3 on the season. The Tigers won the first set, 25-21, but then dropped the next three, 25-15, 25-22 and 25-18, as the Falcons won the match that was played in Groton on Tuesday.

Three Groton Area players hit double figures with Anna Fjeldheim having 12 kills and one ace, Sydney Leicht had 11 kills and two aces and Apsen Johnson had 11 kills. Others adding to the tally were Lydia Meier with four kills and an ace, Laila Roberts had a kill and two aces, Hollie Frost and Elizabeth Fliehs each had two kills, Jaedyn Penning had a kill and Carly Guthmiller and Jerica Locke each had an ace. Frost also had a block.

Caylin Kelly led Florence-Henry with 20 kills, three blocks and two ace serves. Trinity Watson had 11 kills, two blocks and an ace and Macey Lane had nine kills and two aces. Karlie Sharp added five ace serves, Taylor Watson had four kills and Reese Schmidt had three ace serves.

Groton Area had 92 digs with Fjeldheim having 25, Guthmiller 21 and Leicht 16. Fliehs had 32 assists and Guthmiller had three.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, John Sieh Agency, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Locke Electric, Dacotah Bank, SD Army National Guard, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc. Groton Area Chamber of Commerce with Justin Hanson doing the play-by-play.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-8, 24-26 and 15-4. Jaedyn Penning had 13 kills and six ace serves, Faith Traphagen had five kills and five ace serves, Rylee Dunker had three kills, two blocks and an ace serve, Emma Kutter had four kills and a block, Talli Wright had three kills, Carly Guthmiller three ace serves, Chesney Weber had two kills and an ace and Jerica Locke had two ace serves.

The match was also broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Grandma Penning and Lane Hogstad.

## Preschool Developmental Screening

### Groton Area Schools #06-6

Preschool Developmental Screening is for children ages 3-4 who reside in the Groton Area School District. The child needs to be 3 years of age before the screening date/day. This screening is not required to enter Kindergarten.

The screening consists of adaptive, personal/social, communicating/speaking, motor, and concepts skills. If you believe your child has difficulties in any of these areas please contact the school.

If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

Screenings will be held on Friday, September 30 8:00-3:30. Information will be sent to families who have already been identified. Please contact Heidi Krueger at 605-397-2317 to schedule a screening time.



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## Weekly (Sen. Mike) Round[s] Up September 19-25

It was another busy week out in DC! My schedule was packed with committee hearings, floor votes and meetings with South Dakotans. Although we have long days filled with work, we had fun moments throughout this week, including presenting some special awards and receiving some pretty cool awards, too. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce, Xcel Energy, SDN Communications, KBR Contracting, Associated General Contractors of South Dakota, South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition, South Dakota leadership class and superintendents and principals from schools in South Dakota who utilize impact aid. I attended the Out of the Darkness walk in Sioux Falls organized by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

I also had the opportunity to meet with John and Beth Hughes, my nominees for this year's Angels in Adoption Award. John and Beth have helped with over 500 adoptions in 45 states during their 31 years of practice. It was great to see them out in DC and recognize them for all of their hard work.

Other meetings this week: Jane Fraser, CEO of Citi Bank; Admiral Richard, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command; John Garrison, the CEO of Terex; Electronic Transactions Association's Fintech policy forum; and Dr. Shereef Elnahal, VA Undersecretary for Health.

We also had our weekly Senate Bible Study (1 Corinthians 13:1 was our verse this week) and our Senate Prayer Breakfast (Senator Hagerty from Tennessee was our speaker).

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Bonesteel, Box Elder, Canton, Chamberlain, Custer, Dupree, Eagle Butte, Fort Pierre, Martin, McIntosh, McLaughlin, Mission, Mobridge, Pierre, Pine Ridge, Presho, Rapid City, Renner, Sioux Falls, Timber Lake, Wagner, Wall, Webster and Winner.

I was able to meet with Robbie Willard, a Vietnam veteran from Renner, and award him a Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin to thank him for his service.

Topics discussed: The reveal of the B-21 Raider bomber coming this December, the upcoming continuing resolution to keep the government funded for a few more months, and the need for increased mental health services.

Votes taken: 9 – Most of these votes were on nominees. We also voted on the ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, a treaty concerning the environment that could increase costs for South Dakotans. I voted no.

Hearings: There were two hearings in the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee again this week. The first one was focused on US sanctions on Russia. In the second hearing, we heard from the CEOs of America's seven largest banks. I was also ranking member had a Housing subcommittee hearing on the Department of Agriculture's rural housing service. There was an Armed Services committee hearing on US nuclear policy. We also had a Veterans Affairs committee hearing, where we heard from VA Secretary McDonough on timely care at the VA facilities and the Care in the Community program. I appreciated the opportunity to follow up with Secretary McDonough about the long wait times at the Sioux Falls VA facilities.

Classified briefings: We had a briefing on the ongoing situation in Ukraine.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Burke, Chamberlain, Kimball, Mount Vernon, Pierre and Sioux Falls.

Staff happenings: Some of my DC staff came out to Nationals Park after work on Wednesday to support me and my colleague, Senator Jon Tester from Montana, in Anheuser-Busch's Congressional Brewing Competition. We made a beer called the 17 Finger Select using barley from Jon's farm in Montana. We took home both trophies – the People's Choice Award and the Brew Democracy Cup, which was voted on by a panel of judges.

Steps taken this week: 52,880 (or 24.8 miles)

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## September Students of the Month

Congratulations to the following for being selected as Groton Area's September Student of the Month.  
Back left: Rylee Dunker (9th), Gretchen Dinger (10th), Anna Fjeldheim (11th), Jacob Lewandowski (12th)  
Front Left: Aspen Beto (6th), Elizabeth Cole (7th), Teagan Hanten (8th)



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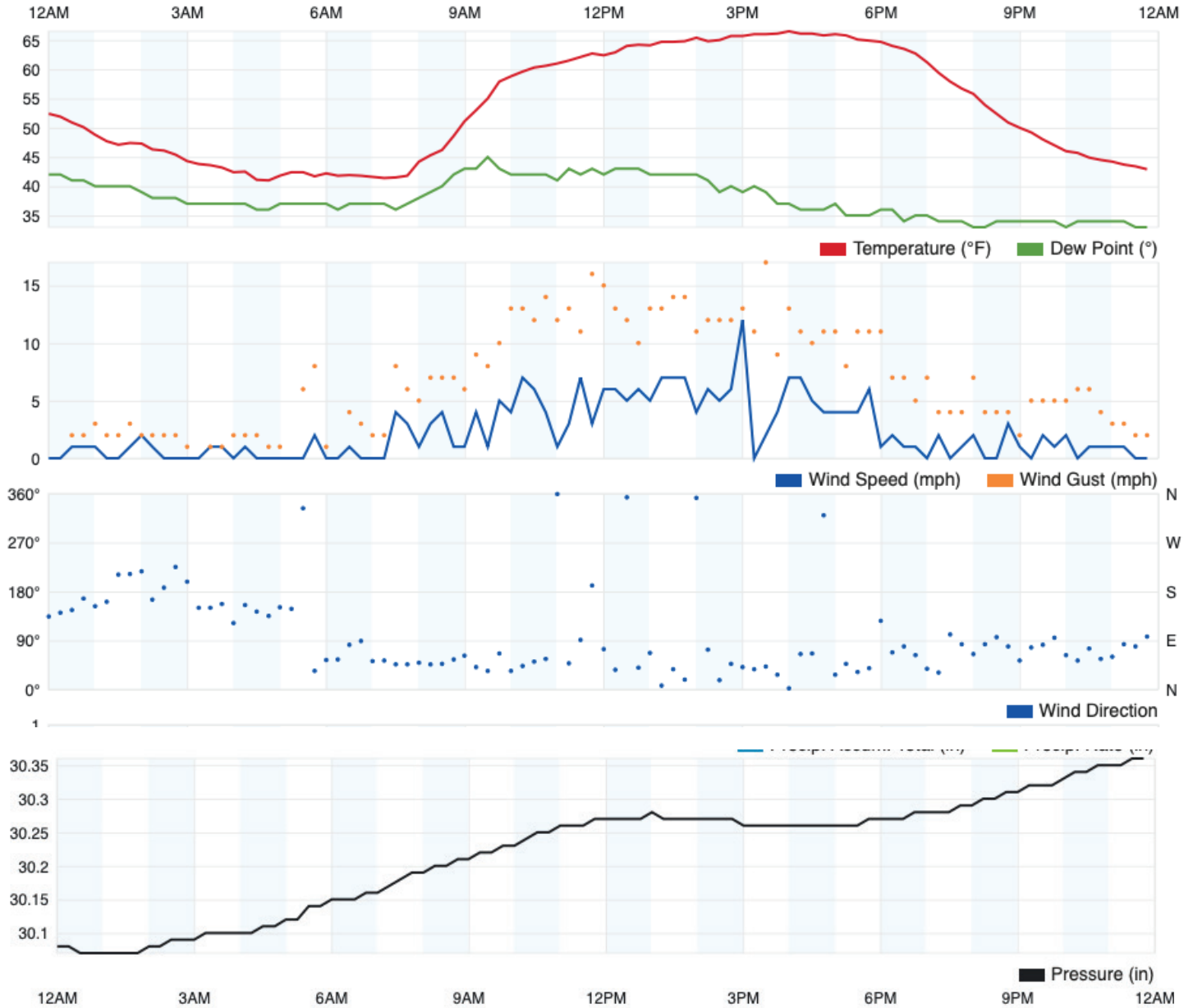
**Tristin McGannon and Jacob Lewandowski ran in the Groton Cross Country Meet.**

(Photos by Bruce Babcock)

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Wednesday



Frost then  
Sunny

High: 66 °F

Wednesday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 45 °F

Thursday



Mostly Sunny  
and Breezy

High: 71 °F

Thursday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 51 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 73 °F



## Continued Above Average Temps

September 28, 2022  
2:15 AM

- **Today**

*Partly Cloudy & Breezy  
Highs 70-80°*

- **Thursday**

*Mostly Sunny, Highs 70-90°*

- **Friday**

*Increasing Clouds, Highs 71-85°*

- **Saturday-Sunday Outlook**

*Partly to Mostly Cloudy, Chance of  
Showers west, Highs in the 70s*

High to Very High Grassland  
Fire Danger This Afternoon  
for Central & Northeast  
South Dakota



National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Gusty winds and dry conditions will lead to very high grassland fire danger over the region this afternoon. The rest of the work week looks less windy, but still warm with highs above average region wide.  
#sdwx #mnwx

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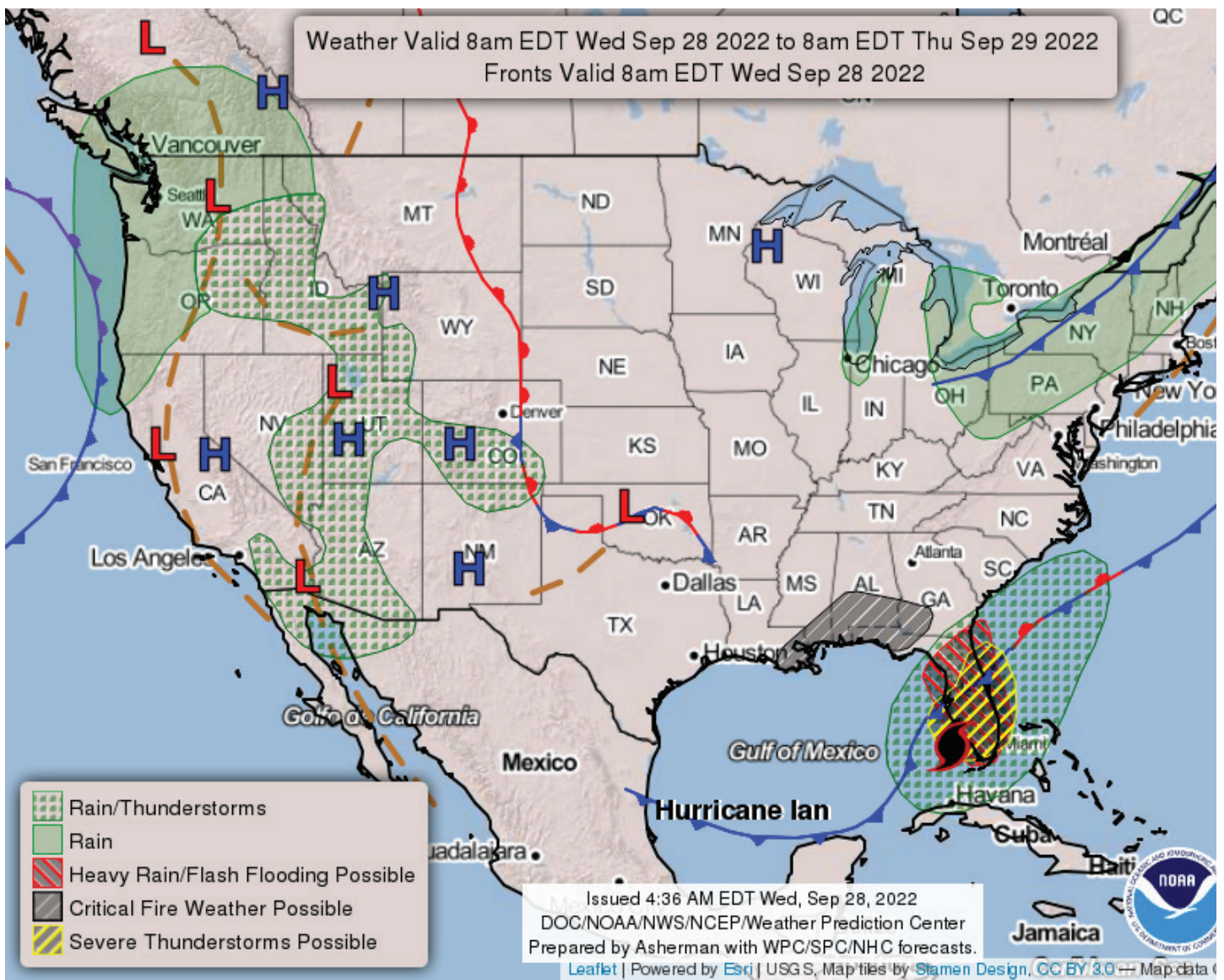
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 67 °F at 3:55 PM**  
**Low Temp: 41 °F at 4:34 AM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 3:26 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 11 hours, 54 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 2021  
Record Low: 18 in 1951  
Average High: 70°F  
Average Low: 42°F  
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.86  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.07  
Average Precip to date: 18.20  
Precip Year to Date: 16.05  
Sunset Tonight: 7:20:08 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27:00 AM





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## Today in Weather History

September 28, 1951: During the early morning hours, near-record to record cold covered central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota. Temperatures across the area fell into the upper teens and 20s. Aberdeen recorded a record low of 18 degrees; Kennebec dropped to 20 degrees, Pierre fell to 21 degrees while Timber Lake had a record low of 23 degrees. The overnight low in Mobridge was 23 degrees, 24 degrees at Watertown, and 26 degrees at Sisseton.

1836 - The first of three early season snows brought four inches of snow to Hamilton, NY, and two inches to Ashby MA. (David Ludlum)

1837: The first recorded storm to rake the entire Texas coast was Racer's Storm, named for a British sloop of war which encountered the system in the extreme northwestern Caribbean on September 28th. It is remembered as one of the most destructive storms of the nineteenth century due to its extreme duration and 2000 mile path of destruction.

1874: A strong category 1 hurricane went by Charleston and Georgetown, South Carolina. The tide was unprecedented height, inundating the entire riverfront of the city of Charleston.

1893 - Albuquerque, NM, was soaked with 2.25 inches of rain, enough to establish a 24 hour record for that city. (The Weather Channel)

1917 - A hurricane hit Pensacola, FL. Winds gusted to 95 mph, and the barometric pressure dipped to 28.50 inches. Winds at Mobile AL gusted to 75 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1929: A hurricane-spawned tornado hit Fort Lauderdale, Florida. While the path length of this estimated F2 tornado was 0.8 miles, it caused 16 injuries.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced up to ten inches of rain in southern Kansas and north central Oklahoma overnight. The Chikaskia River rose 2.5 feet above flood stage at Blackwell OK during the day causing flooding in Kay and Grant counties of north central Oklahoma. Early morning thunderstorms in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas produced 3.07 inches of rain in six hours at McAllen. Thunderstorms produced up to six inches of rain in southeastern Texas later in the day. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front in the central U.S. produced severe weather from northern Texas to the Lower Missouri Valley during the late afternoon and evening hours. Hail three inches in diameter was reported at Nolan TX, and wind gusts to 80 mph were reported at Lawrence KS. Thunderstorms drenched downtown Kansas City MO with up to four inches of rain, leaving some cars stranded in water six feet deep. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms over northeastern Florida drenched Jacksonville with 4.28 inches of rain between midnight and 6 AM EDT. Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. Five cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Binghamton NY with a reading of 30 degrees. Morning lows were in the 20s in northern New England. Unseasonably mild weather prevailed in the northwestern U.S., with afternoon highs in the upper 70s and 80s. In Oregon, Astoria reported a record high of 83 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: On the morning of September 28th, Hurricane George made landfall near Biloxi, Mississippi with maximum winds of 110 mph and a minimum pressure of 964 mb, making it a Category 2 hurricane. After landfall, Georges moved very slowly across southern Mississippi and weakened to a tropical depression by the morning of the 29th when the center was about 30 miles north-northeast of Mobile, Alabama. The storm dissipated near the northeast Florida/southeast Georgia coast by the morning of October 1, 1998

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE DIFFERENCE

"You won't find me in church! There are too many hypocrites there. So, why should I go? Hypocrites are no better than I am. So, why bother?" Those of us who invite others to church have heard that phrase at one time or another. Most of us, however, don't go to church because we are hypocrites. We go to church because we're trying not to be one.

Many have "lists" that identify personal differences between being a hypocrite or not being one. For most of us it is a "personal thing." We use our list to judge ourselves against others. So, our list is always correct, no matter what! We become God's standard!

However, it was Solomon who established the difference between being righteous and wicked. He removed any doubt that we might have: "Righteousness," he wrote, "guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner."

If we love God, we will love what He loves and hate what He hates. Nothing complicated there. So, if God loves truth and honesty, pure living and obedience to His Word, the righteous will, too. But more than embrace what is righteous, we will avoid what is evil by guarding ourselves against it. Righteousness does not mean Christians live passive lives, but are active in being and doing whatever it takes to avoid behaviors that God hates.

"Wickedness" in Scripture has an interesting meaning. It refers to "being deceptive to the point where the wicked act disgracefully and their behavior causes a 'stink.'" They see no reason to be concerned about what they are doing, understanding that what they do will finally bring "disaster" to them. God will not allow the wicked or wickedness to prevail!

Prayer: Father, give us courage to stand against that which is evil and harms others. Empower us to do what is right and honorable, just and fair! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The godly hate lies; the wicked cause shame and disgrace. Proverbs 13:5



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him



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## 2022-23 Community Events

- 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  
07/24/2022: 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  
No Date Set: 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)  
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm  
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.  
09/02-04: 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  
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)  
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

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Groton Independent

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Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months ..... \$26.63
- 6 Months ..... \$31.95
- 9 Months ..... \$42.60
- 12 Months ..... \$53.25

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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 Tuesday:

Mega Millions

08-14-24-43-51, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 3

(eight, fourteen, twenty-four, forty-three, fifty-one; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$355,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 300,000,000

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Colome, 16-25, 25-18, 25-13, 25-22

Baltic def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-10, 25-16, 25-18

Belle Fourche def. Custer, 25-17, 25-15, 25-9

Canton def. West Central, 25-19, 25-13, 25-16

Chester def. Deubrook, 25-19, 25-16, 25-12

Colman-Egan def. Howard, 19-25, 25-13, 25-21, 25-19

Crow Creek def. St. Francis Indian, 26-24, 11-25, 25-18, 19-25, 15-4

DeSmet def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-18, 25-22, 27-29

Dell Rapids def. Montrose, 25-23, 25-21, 25-17

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Flandreau, 25-16, 25-12, 25-14

Estelline/Hendricks def. Flandreau Indian, 25-4, 25-6, 25-7

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Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## Pilot killed as small helicopter crashes in South Dakota

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — The pilot of a small helicopter was killed in a crash Tuesday in southeastern South Dakota, according to officials.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the AG-915 Spartan helicopter went down at about 10:30 a.m. near the Chan Gurney Municipal Airport in Yankton, a city on the Missouri River.

Officials say only the pilot was on board. Yankton Assistant Fire Chief Larry Nickels told WNAX radio the aircraft was destroyed on impact.

Nickels says the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board have been called to investigate because of the fatality.

## Brother accused of fatally strangling sister in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man accused of killing his sister by strangulation is being held on \$100,000 cash bond.

Nicklaus Houchin, 28, is charged with first-degree manslaughter in Thursday's death of 31-year-old Danielle Houchin of Rapid City.

The brother and sister were in a vehicle with several others who were delivering an online food order. The group was drinking alcohol and stopped at a restaurant to pick up some food when the siblings got into a physical fight, officials said.

Rapid City Police Department spokesman Brendyn Medina said the altercation occurred inside the vehicle where the woman was strangled.

According to authorities, the group drove to the Rushmore Crossing shopping center before calling 911, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Police found woman on the ground near a vehicle. Danielle Houchin died while a medical team was transporting her to a hospital, police said.

The state argued for the \$100,000 cash bond Monday in court on the grounds that Houchin is a danger to his family and others. The public defender's office opted to reserve a bail argument for another date.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Oct. 11.

## Ian just shy of a Category 5 hurricane as it nears Florida

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., (AP) — Hurricane Ian rapidly intensified off Florida's southwest coast Wednesday morning, gaining top winds of 155 mph (250 kph), just shy of the most dangerous Category 5 status. Damaging winds and rain lashed the state's heavily populated Gulf Coast, with the Naples to Sarasota region at "highest risk" of a devastating storm surge.

U.S. Air Force hurricane hunters confirmed Ian gained strength over warm Gulf of Mexico water after battering Cuba, bringing down the country's electricity grid and leaving the entire island without power.

The hurricane could push as much as 12 feet (3.6 meters) of ocean water ashore in Florida, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said, urging people to evacuate the danger zone if they still can. More than 2.5 million people were under mandatory evacuation orders, but by law no one could be forced to flee.

Ian was centered about 65 miles (105 kilometers) west-southwest of Naples at 7 a.m., swirling toward the coast at 10 mph (17 kph).

Florida residents rushed ahead of the impact to board up their homes, stash precious belongings on upper floors and flee.

"You can't do anything about natural disasters," said Vinod Nair, who drove inland from the Tampa area Tuesday with his wife, son, dog and two kittens seeking a hotel in the tourist district of Orlando. "We live in a high risk zone, so we thought it best to evacuate."

Winds exceeding tropical-storm strength of 39 mph (63 kph) reached Florida by 3 a.m. and the first hurricane-force winds were recorded by 6 a.m., well in advance of the eyewall moving inland, the Miami-based center said. Rainfall near the area of landfall could top 18 inches (46 centimeters).

"It is a big storm, it is going to kick up a lot of water as it comes in," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said in Sarasota, a coastal city of 57,000 in the storm's projected path. "This the kind of storm surge that is life threatening."

Ian's forward movement slowed over the Gulf, enabling the hurricane to grow wider and stronger, and its predicted path shifted slightly southward, likely sparing the Tampa Bay area its first direct hit by a major hurricane since 1921. But with hurricane-force winds expected over much of the peninsula, many cities could see significant damage.

Gil Gonzalez wasn't taking any chances. He boarded the windows of his Tampa home with plywood and laid down sandbags to guard against any flooding. He and his wife packed their car with bottled water, flashlights, battery packs for their cellphones and a camp stove before evacuating.

"All the prized possessions, we've put them upstairs in a friend's house," Gonzalez said.

Airports in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Key West closed, as did Disney World theme parks and Sea World in Orlando ahead of the storm.

A couple from England on vacation in Tampa found themselves faced with riding out the storm at a shelter. Glyn and Christine Williams of London were told to leave their hotel near the beach when evacuations were ordered. Because the airport shut down, they could get no flight home.

"Unfortunately, all the hotels are full or closed, so it looks as though we're going to be in one of the shelters," Christine Williams said.

Her husband insisted all would be fine. "You know, you got to go with the flow," Glyn Williams said. "So we're quite happy doing what we're doing."

The precise location of landfall was still uncertain, but with Ian's tropical storm-force winds extending 175 miles (280 kilometers) from its center, flash floods were possible across the whole state. Parts of Florida's east coast faced a storm surge threat as well, and isolated tornadoes were spinning off the storm well ahead of landfall.

Florida Power and Light warned those in Ian's path to brace for days without electricity. As a precaution, hundreds of residents were being evacuated from several nursing homes in the Tampa area, where hospitals also were moving some patients.

Parts of Georgia and South Carolina also could see flooding rains and some coastal surge into Saturday.



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Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp preemptively declared an emergency, ordering 500 National Guard troops onto standby to respond as needed.

Before turning toward Florida, Ian struck Cuba's Pinar del Rio province with sustained winds of 125 mph (205 kph) and causing destruction in the island nation's world-famous tobacco belt. No deaths were reported.

Local government station TelePinar reported heavy damage at the main hospital in Pinar del Rio city, tweeting photos of collapsed ceilings, widely flung debris and toppled trees. Some people left the stricken area on foot, carrying their children, while buses tried to evacuated others through waterlogged streets. Others opted to stay at their damaged houses.

"It was horrible," said Yusimi Palacios, a resident of Pinar del Rio inside her damaged house. "But here we are alive, and I only ask the Cuban revolution to help me with the roof and the mattress."

## NKorea test launches missiles on eve of Harris trip to Seoul

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Wednesday, South Korea's military said, a day before U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris is to visit the South.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the North Korean missiles lifted off 10 minutes apart on Wednesday afternoon from its capital region and flew toward the waters off its east coast.

It said South Korea has boosted its surveillance and is maintaining a military readiness in close coordination with the United States.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida instructed officials to take "utmost caution" in case of any emergencies, while gathering information and ensuring the safety of vessels and aircraft. Japan's coast guard issued a warning to vessels in the area, but there were no reports of damage.

The launches follow a missile test by North Korea earlier this week. Harris is to arrive in South Korea on Thursday for talks with President Yoon Suk Yeol and other officials. She also is to visit the tense border with North Korea, in what U.S. officials call an attempt to underscore the strength of the U.S.-South Korean alliance and the U.S. commitment to "stand beside" South Korea in the face of any North Korea threats.

U.S. and South Korean navy ships are also conducting drills off South Korea's east coast in a show of force against North Korea.

The four-day exercise, which began Monday, involves the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan. It is the first training exercise by the allies involving a U.S. aircraft carrier near the Korean Peninsula since 2017.

South Korea-U.S. joint military exercises often draw a furious response from North Korea, which views them as an invasion rehearsal. A short-range North Korean missile launched Sunday was seen as a response to the U.S.-South Korean training.

North Korea has dialed up its missile testing activities to a record pace in 2022, launching more than 30 ballistic weapons, including its first intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017. North Korea's Sunan area where Wednesday's launches occurred was the site of various missile tests this year, including two ICBMs.

Earlier this month, North Korea adopted a new law authorizing the preemptive use of nuclear weapons in some situations, as it continues to escalate its nuclear doctrine. U.S. and South Korean officials have also said the North may soon conduct its first nuclear test in five years.

Earlier Wednesday, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers that a nuclear test could happen between mid-October and early November.

According to some lawmakers who attended the meeting, the National Intelligence Service said if the test occurs, it is likely to come after China, North Korea's last major ally, holds a key Communist Party congress on Oct. 16 but before the United States votes in midterm elections on Nov. 7.

North Korea's torrid run of weapons tests this year is seen as exploiting divides in the United Nations Security Council over Russia's war against Ukraine and the U.S.-China rivalry. In May, China and Russia vetoed a U.S.-led bid to impose new sanctions on North Korea over its ballistic missile tests this year, which

violate U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Associated Press writer Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

## EU vows to act if energy lines hit as firms ramp up security

By LORNE COOK and JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union suspects that damage to two underwater natural gas pipelines was sabotage and is warning of retaliation for any attack on Europe's energy networks, a senior official said Wednesday, as energy companies began ramping up security.

The episode underscored the vulnerability of Europe's energy infrastructure and further heightened tensions in the continent that has been rocked by the seven-month war in Ukraine.

Seismologists reported that explosions rattled the Baltic Sea before unusual leaks were discovered Tuesday on two underwater natural gas pipelines running from Russia to Germany. The incidents came as the EU struggles to keep a lid on soaring gas and electricity prices.

"All available information indicates those leaks are the result of a deliberate act," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement on behalf of the bloc's 27 members. "Any deliberate disruption of European energy infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and will be met with a robust and united response."

Some European leaders and experts pointed to possible sabotage given the energy standoff with Russia provoked by the war in Ukraine. The three leaks were reported on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, which are filled with natural gas but aren't delivering the fuel to Europe.

The pipelines allow gas to be piped to Germany without transiting through Ukraine or Poland. The damage means that they are unlikely to be able to carry any gas to Europe this winter even if the political will to bring them online emerged, according to analysts.

The extent of the damage to the pipelines, along with the political ramifications, raises serious doubts about the future of the Nord Stream projects. Germany was heavily criticized for the project by the U.S. and many of its European partners, which said that it only increased Europe's reliance on Russian gas imports.

While it remains unknown who might be responsible for the damage, given its undersea location, Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau said Tuesday that the leaks could be part of Russia's hybrid war on NATO.

"The explosions took place very close to Danish territorial waters, but not inside them, because that would have meant NATO territory," Rau said during a discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"This could mean that someone is trying to intimidate the countries of the Baltic Sea. With the exception of Russia, all these countries are NATO members or are aspiring to membership," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said allegations that Russia could be behind the incidents were "predictable and stupid." He told reporters in a conference call that the damage has caused Russia huge economic losses.

Even with eyes turning toward Russia, Anders Puck Nielsen, a researcher with the Center for Maritime Operations at the Royal Danish Defence College, said that it would be hard to establish who is responsible and just as tough to prevent similar incidents.

"We have pipelines, we have communication cables like the internet. We have just power lines running on the seabed. All of this is vulnerable and our societies are very dependent on it. And it's very, very difficult to monitor what's going on and to prevent a case of sabotage," he told The Associated Press.

German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said "the circumstances surrounding this disturbing event must now be quickly clarified and those responsible identified." Borrell said the EU will support any investigation into the damage, and will "increase our resilience in energy security."

Energy companies and governments are already reacting. The Norwegian state oil company, Equinor, said it has decided to raise the level of preparedness in Norway, according to Norwegian broadcaster NRK. The alert was raised overnight and applies to all of Equinor's facilities.

Norway isn't a member of the EU, but is major producer of offshore oil and gas. Its energy exports have

surged as European countries scramble to find alternatives to Russian energy supplies.

The Norwegian government decided on Tuesday to boost security around its energy infrastructure, land facilities and installations on the Norwegian continental shelf after reports of an increase in unidentified drone flights.

The leaks in the gas pipelines were spotted off the Danish Baltic Sea island of Bornholm. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has said that "it is the authorities' clear assessment that these are deliberate actions — not accidents."

But she said "there is no information indicating who could be behind it." Frederiksen rejected the suggestion that the incident was an attack on Denmark, saying the leaks occurred in international waters.

Denmark's defense minister, Morten Bødskov, met Wednesday with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to discuss the incidents. The Danish defense ministry said it also believes "that the violations occurred as a result of a deliberate act."

Bødskov warned in a statement that "there is reason to be concerned about the security situation in the Baltic Sea region. Despite the war efforts in Ukraine, Russia has a significant military presence in the Baltic Sea region and we expect them to continue their saber rattling."

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## Bank of England to buy UK bonds to avert financial risk

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Bank of England said Wednesday that it will launch a temporary government bond-buying program to stave off "material risk to U.K. financial stability" after unfunded government tax cuts spooked markets and sent the British pound tumbling.

The emergency intervention means the central bank will buy government bonds in an effort to stabilize the market and drive down the soaring cost of government borrowing.

The bank said in a statement that it is "monitoring developments in financial markets very closely in light of the significant repricing of U.K. and global financial assets" — especially long-dated U.K. government debt.

As a result, it said "the bank will carry out temporary purchases of long-dated U.K. government bonds from 28 September. The purpose of these purchases will be to restore orderly market conditions."

The move came after the International Monetary Fund urged Britain's Conservative government to "re-evaluate" unfunded tax cuts that it says may fuel inflation and are likely to increase economic inequality.

After the rare IMF warning to a Group of Seven economy, the value of the pound sagged Wednesday morning, trading at under \$1.07. The central bank intervention did not boost it.

The British government said it was underwriting the central bank's emergency bond purchases, which are due to last for two weeks.

"To enable the Bank to conduct this financial stability intervention, this operation has been fully indemnified by HM Treasury," it said in a statement.

Treasury chief Kwasi Kwarteng also was meeting Wednesday with executives from investment banks as the new government seeks to soothe markets alarmed by its decision to slash taxes and increase borrowing.

The government of Prime Minister Liz Truss on Friday unveiled a 45 billion-pound (\$48 billion) package of tax cuts in an effort to spur economic growth. But the plan wasn't accompanied by spending cuts, or even an independent cost estimate, raising concerns that it would swell government debt and add to inflation that is already running at close to a 40-year high of 9.9%.

"Given elevated inflation pressures in many countries, including the U.K., we do not recommend large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture, as it is important that fiscal policy does not work at cross purposes to monetary policy," the IMF said in a statement. "Furthermore, the nature of the U.K. measures will likely increase inequality."

The British pound fell to a record low against the U.S. dollar Monday, to \$1.0373, amid investor concern about the government's policies, which also include borrowing billions to help shield homes and businesses from soaring energy prices.



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The Bank of England sought to stabilize markets, saying Monday that it was prepared to raise interest rates "as much as needed" to rein in inflation. But the bank's next scheduled meeting is not until November, and the lack of immediate action did little to bolster the pound.

The British currency is still down 4% since Friday, and the pound has fallen 20% against the dollar in the past year.

The turmoil is already having real-world effects, with British mortgage lenders pulling hundreds of offers from the market amid expectations the Bank of England will sharply boost interest rates to offset the inflationary impact of the pound's recent slide.

The U.K. government has resisted pressure to reverse course but says it will set out a more detailed fiscal plan and independent analysis from the Office for Budget Responsibility on Nov. 23.

"The Nov. 23 budget will present an early opportunity for the U.K. government to consider ways to provide support that is more targeted and reevaluate the tax measures, especially those that benefit high income earners," the IMF said.

In response, the U.K. Treasury said the government was "focused on growing the economy to raise living standards for everyone."

The November statement will set out further details of the government's plan and ensure that debt falls as a share of gross domestic product "in the medium term," a spokeswoman said.

Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, said the stinging criticism by the IMF also comes at a time that UK gilt yields — the interest paid on government debt — are "sky high," with the yield on 10-year gilts hovering around 4.4%, up by more than 340% in a year.

"The IMF's move has added to worries that the UK is fast taking on the characteristics of an emerging market economy, and risks ditching its developed country status," Streeter wrote in an analyst note.

## Russia prepares to annex occupied Ukraine despite outcry

By JON GAMBRELL and ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia is poised to formally annex areas of Ukraine where it has military control after referendums there reportedly endorsed Moscow's rule.

But the ballots were widely discredited and earned the Kremlin no relief Wednesday from international pressure over its assault on its neighbor.

Pro-Moscow administrations of all four occupied regions of southern and eastern Ukraine said Tuesday night that their residents voted to join Russia in five days of Kremlin-orchestrated balloting.

According to Russia-installed election officials, 93% of the ballots cast in the Zaporizhzhia region supported annexation, as did 87% in the Kherson region, 98% in the Luhansk region and 99% in Donetsk.

Russian-installed officials in those occupied regions said Wednesday they would ask President Vladimir Putin to incorporate them into Russia. It wasn't immediately clear how the administrative process would unfold.

Western countries, however, dismissed the ballots as a meaningless pretense staged by Moscow in an attempt to legitimize its invasion of Ukraine launched on Feb. 24.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said late Tuesday that Washington would propose a U.N. Security Council resolution to condemn Russia's "sham" vote.

The resolution would also urge member states not to recognize any altered status of Ukraine and demand that Russia withdraws its troops from its neighbor, she tweeted.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, also weighed in on the ballots, on Wednesday calling them "illegal" and describing the results as "falsified."

"This is another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty (and) territorial integrity, (amid) systematic abuses of human rights," Borrell tweeted.

In Kyiv, Ukraine's foreign ministry blasted the ballots as "a propaganda show" and "null and worthless."

"Forcing people in these territories to fill out some papers at the barrel of a gun is yet another Russian crime in the course of its aggression against Ukraine," a foreign ministry statement said.

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It asked the EU, NATO and the Group of Seven major industrial nations to "immediately and significantly" step up pressure on Russia through new sanctions, and significantly increase their military aid to Ukraine.

The Kremlin remained unmoved amid the hail of criticism, however. Its spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that at the very least Russia intended to drive Ukrainian forces out of the eastern Donetsk region, where Moscow's troops and separatist forces currently control about 60% of the territory.

The EU also expressed outrage over the suspected sabotage Tuesday of two underwater natural gas pipelines from Russia to Germany and warned of retaliation for any attack on Europe's energy networks.

Borrell said Wednesday that "all available information indicates those leaks are the result of a deliberate act," even though the perpetrators haven't so far been identified.

"Any deliberate disruption of European energy infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and will be met with a robust and united response," Borrell said in a statement on behalf of the EU's 27 member countries.

Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, said allegations that Russia could be behind the incidents were "predictable and stupid." He told reporters in a conference call that the damage has caused Russia huge economic losses.

The war in Ukraine has brought an energy standoff between the EU, many of whose members have for years relied heavily on Russian natural gas supplies, and Moscow.

The damage makes it unlikely the pipelines will be able to supply any gas to Europe this winter, according to analysts.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military and a Washington-based think tank said Wednesday that Russia is sending troops without any training to the front line.

Moscow has struggled to hold the line against Ukraine's recent counteroffensive and has ordered a partial mobilization to replenish its ranks. The effort is causing unrest, however, amid a reluctant public.

In a daily briefing, the Ukraine military's general staff said 1st Tank Regiment of the 2nd Motorized Rifle Division of Russia's 1st Tank Army has received untrained new troops.

The Ukrainian military also said prison convicts are arriving in Ukraine to reinforce the Russian lines. It offered no evidence to support the claim, though the Ukrainian security services have released audio of allegedly monitored Russian phone conversations on the issue.

The Institute for the Study of War think tank cited one online video by a man who identified himself as a member of the 1st Tank Regiment, visibly upset, saying that he and his colleagues wouldn't receive training before shipping out to the Russian-occupied region of Kherson in Ukraine.

"Mobilized men with a day or two of training are unlikely to meaningfully reinforce Russian positions affected by Ukrainian counteroffensives in the south and east," the institute said.

The U.K. ministry of defense said Ukraine's counteroffensive, which has inflicted some humiliating defeats on Moscow's forces, is advancing slowly.

It said Russia is currently putting up a stouter defense.

In the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk, which is partially occupied by Moscow, Russian fire killed five people and wounded 10 others over the last 24 hours, said Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of the local military authority.

Authorities in the southern Ukrainian city of Nikopol said Russian rockets and artillery pounded the city overnight.

The city, across the Dnipro River from Russian-occupied territory, saw 10 high-rises and private buildings hit, as well as a school, power lines and other areas, said Valentyn Reznichenko, the head of the local military administration, said.

## Ian powers up to a Category 4 hurricane as it nears Florida

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., (AP) — Hurricane Ian intensified into an extremely dangerous Category 4 storm as it approached Florida and forecasters predicted it would retain top winds of 140 mph (220 kph) until landfall Wednesday afternoon. Tropical storm force winds and rain were already hitting the state's heavily

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populated Gulf Coast, with the Naples to Sarasota region at "highest risk" of a devastating storm surge.

U.S. Air Force hurricane hunters confirmed Ian gained strength over warm Gulf of Mexico water after battering Cuba, bringing down the country's electricity grid and leaving the entire island without power.

The hurricane could push as much as 12 feet (3.6 meters) of ocean water ashore in Florida, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said, urging people to evacuate the danger zone if they still can. More than 2.5 million people were under mandatory evacuation orders, but by law no one could be forced to flee.

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Florida residents rushed ahead of the impact to board up their homes, stash precious belongings on upper floors and flee.

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The hurricane center predicted Ian would roar ashore Wednesday afternoon. Winds exceeding tropical-storm strength of 39 mph (63 kph) reached Florida by 3 a.m. and hurricane-force winds were expected in Florida well in advance of the eyewall moving inland, the Miami-based center said. Rainfall near the area of landfall could top 18 inches (46 centimeters).

"It is a big storm, it is going to kick up a lot of water as it comes in," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said in Sarasota, a coastal city of 57,000 in the storm's projected path. "This the kind of storm surge that is life threatening."

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The precise location of landfall was still uncertain, but with Ian's tropical storm-force winds extending 175 miles (280 kilometers) from its center, damage was expected across a wide area of Florida. Flash floods were possible across the whole state, and portions of its east coast faced a potential storm surge threat as Ian's bands approach the Atlantic Ocean. Warnings also were issued for isolated tornadoes.

Florida Power and Light warned those in Ian's path to brace for days without electricity. As a precaution, hundreds of residents were being evacuated from several nursing homes in the Tampa area, where hospitals also were moving some patients.

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"It was horrible," said Yusimi Palacios, a resident of Pinar del Rio inside her damaged house. "But here we are alive, and I only ask the Cuban revolution to help me with the roof and the mattress."

## White House gains partners to end US hunger within a decade

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is counting on a variety of private-sector partnerships to help fund and implement its ambitious goal of ending hunger in America by 2030.

President Joe Biden is hosting a conference Wednesday on hunger, nutrition and health, the first by the White House since 1969. That conference, under President Richard Nixon, was a pivotal moment that influenced U.S. food policy agenda for 50 years.

The conference hosted by Nixon, a Republican, led to a major expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps, and gave rise to the Women, Infants and Children program, which serves half the babies born in the U.S. by providing their mothers with parenting advice, breastfeeding support and food assistance.

This year's conference hosted by Biden, a Democrat, focuses on his goal of essentially ending food insecurity for all Americans by decade's end. It also seeks to promote healthy eating, good nutrition and physical activity so that fewer people are afflicted with diabetes, obesity, hypertension and other diet-related diseases.

Before the conference, Biden's administration released a list of more than \$8 billion in commitments to the cause from private companies, charitable foundations and industry groups. They range from outright donations to in-kind contributions of services and include:

—A \$20 million commitment from the Novo Nordisk pharmaceutical company to improve access to healthy foods and safe spaces for physical activity in marginalized communities.

—A \$3.85 million commitment from the Publix grocery store chain to supply food to local food banks and establish free mobile food pantries.

—\$22 million from the Danone food company to fund a program to help "at least 300 million Americans to build healthier dietary habits."

—A commitment from the Meijer grocery store chain to offer up to a 10% discount to incentivize users of the SNAP program to buy fruits and vegetables.

Some of the conference's goals sound reminiscent of former first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move initiative to tackle childhood obesity and promote healthy eating, highlighting the need for access to better, healthier food and exercise.

While Biden is touting the successful buy-in campaign from the private sector, some of the strongest potential obstacles to his proposals lie in the increasingly partisan Congress.

Proposed policy changes include an expansion of SNAP eligibility, expanding access to free meals in schools and extending summer meal benefits to more schoolchildren. All of those changes would require congressional approval.

## US seeks united front in Asia despite Korea, Japan tensions

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, MARI YAMAGUCHI and TONG-HYUNG KIM Associated Press

YOKOSUKA, Japan (AP) — Standing on the deck of an American destroyer at a naval base here on Wednesday, Vice President Kamala Harris directly challenged China by accusing it of "disturbing behavior" and "provocations" around Taiwan.

Harris said the United States would in response "deepen our unofficial ties" to the disputed island that China views as part of its territory.

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The escalating tensions over Taiwan have raised the potential for conflict in an already volatile corner of the globe. But the core of U.S. plans for deterring — or, if necessary, confronting — China depends on alliances that are under strain. South Korea and Japan, which Harris described as the “linchpin” and “cornerstone” of American strategy in Asia, remain at odds with each other, divided by the legacy of World War II despite renewed efforts at reconciliation.

Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula years before the conflict began, sending many people into forced labor and women into sexual slavery. Decades later, tensions continue to spill out of the history books and into debates over trade, technology and intelligence sharing.

Although Japan and South Korea are taking steps to repair their relationship, progress remains uncertain. Leaders in both countries face political challenges at home that could make it harder for them to reach compromises abroad, and the disputes are deeply rooted in questions about national honor and responsibility for some of Asia’s worst atrocities.

South Korea believes it is entitled to additional compensation from Japan and a more fulsome acceptance of guilt. Japanese leaders have resisted, saying such issues have already been settled.

The United States is prodding both sides to compromise as it tries to refocus its alliances to counter China’s growing strength.

Harris, whose four-day trip to the region was anchored by the state funeral for former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, told reporters she views American foreign policy in the region “in the context of a trilateral relationship,” with the U.S., Japan and South Korea all working together.

A senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations, said Harris encouraged the South Korean and Japanese leaders to advance their negotiations during her meetings with them.

The U.S. wants “to see two of our closest allies in the world working even better with each other,” and “we’re gratified to see that both countries seem determined to address those issues with a real vigor,” the official said.

However, the official said the U.S. had a limited role to play.

“It’s not for us to mediate or negotiate or broker what that relationship should look like,” the official said.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sat down with each other last week at the United Nations, the first meeting between leaders of the two countries in three years.

Then on Wednesday, South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo met with Kishida after Abe’s funeral and described their countries as “close neighbors and cooperative partners who share the values of democracy and the principles of the market economy.”

Kristi Govella, deputy director of the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said the U.S. will struggle to achieve its goals if South Korea and Japan don’t work together.

“Broadly, the three countries share the same concerns, but the willingness and capacity to act aren’t always aligned between the three,” she said.

There’s an increasing focus on the tensions because of concerns about Taiwan, where Chinese and American saber rattling has raised fears of conflict. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit in August outraged Beijing, which responded with military exercises.

President Joe Biden recently said the U.S. would send troops if China attacked. Although Taiwan is a self-governing democracy, Beijing views the island as part of its territory and has vowed to unite it with the mainland.

Harris accused China of “a pressure campaign against Taiwan” with “a series of destabilizing actions.”

“We anticipate continued aggressive behavior from Beijing as it attempts to unilaterally undermine the status quo,” she said Wednesday.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin responded to Harris by saying the U.S. had violated its pledge to respect China’s territorial integrity.

“When the U.S. cannot honor its own commitment, in what position can it talk about rules and order? It will only become a saboteur of international rules,” Wang said in a daily briefing.

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Zack Cooper, a senior fellow focused on Asian defense strategy at the American Enterprise Institute, said "there's a feeling that the likelihood of a serious crisis over Taiwan is growing pretty rapidly."

Fractures among American allies could undermine any response to an invasion, said Fang-Yu Chen, a political science professor at Soochow University in Taipei, Taiwan.

"If they don't have good relationships with each other, then there will be trouble," he said.

Ties between South Korea and Japan worsened during the leadership of Abe and former South Korean Prime Minister Moon Jae-in.

Abe's government reacted furiously after South Korea's Supreme Court in 2018 upheld lower court verdicts and ordered Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to compensate Korean forced laborers.

Those rulings led to further tensions in 2019 when Japan placed export controls on chemicals vital to South Korea's semiconductor industry. Citing the deterioration of trust, Japan also removed South Korea from a list of countries with preferential trade status.

Moon's government accused Abe of weaponizing trade and downgraded Japan's trade status in a tit-for-tat move. Seoul even threatened to terminate a military intelligence-sharing agreement with Tokyo that was a major symbol of their three-way security cooperation with Washington.

South Korea eventually backed off and continued the deal under pressure from former President Donald Trump's administration, which until then had seemed content to let the U.S. allies escalate their feud.

Experts say the Japanese export controls had limited impact on South Korea's semiconductor industry, partially because of successful South Korean efforts to diversify their sources of chemicals and materials.

But there are concerns that Japan could respond with further economic retaliation if South Korean courts approve a process to liquidate local assets of Japanese companies that have been refusing court orders to offer reparations to South Korean forced labor victims.

That would undermine U.S. hopes for expanding computer chip manufacturing in allied countries, strengthening delicate supply chains and countering China's own technology investments. Harris met with Japanese business executives on Wednesday and said "no one country can satisfy the globe's demand" and "it is important that we and our allies partner and coordinate."

Japan insists all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations between the two nations that included hundreds of millions of dollars in economic aid and loans from Tokyo to Seoul.

Yoon, the South Korean president who took office in May, has expressed hope for finding a way to resolve the compensation issue without "causing a clash between the sovereignties."

But it's unclear what kind of compromise the countries could reach as South Korean plaintiffs have been rejecting the idea of receiving compensation from the South Korean government instead of Japanese companies.

Kishida also says both countries need to improve ties because of the worsening security environment in the region, although Japanese officials insist that Seoul should be the one to make the first step and propose plans acceptable to Japan.

Daniel Sneider, a lecturer in East Asian Studies at Stanford University, wrote recently that Japan and South Korea are being nudged closer together by threats including North Korea.

However, he said both countries will need to make compromises for their cooperation — and their alliances with the U.S. — to reach their full potential.

"True trilateral cooperation, even with the strategic imperatives, depends on resolving the profound disputes over wartime history and justice," he wrote.

## **LGBTQ advocates, women worry in Italy after Meloni's win**

By FRANCES D'EMILIO and TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Swept away by Italian elections that are expected to see Giorgia Meloni soon form the nation's first far-right-led government since World War II were veterans of successful battles for civil rights, including divorce and abortion, as well as lawmakers still struggling for freedoms like same-sex marriage.



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Worried that the conservative tide of political sentiment that emerged in Sunday's voting for Parliament might erode hard-won civil rights, Italy's women are mobilizing, organizing rallies in a dozen cities for Wednesday evening to raise their voices in defense of abortion rights.

Organizers said they feared Meloni's Brothers of Italy party will launch "a triad of 'God, homeland and family,'" policies — a reference to her political manifesto.

That could impose "rigid gender roles and assign women the task of reproduction and growth of a white, patriarchal and heterosexual nation," organizers said in their announcement of the rallies against the agenda of Meloni, who would become Italy's first far-right premier of the post-war period and its first woman in that office.

Perhaps Italy's most celebrated living civil rights activist, Emma Bonino, lost her Senate seat to a Rome city councilwoman from Brothers of Italy, the party co-founded a decade ago by Meloni, who exalts motherhood and "traditional" families and who decries LGBTQ "lobbies." Lavinia Munnino's no. 1 campaign priority was growing Italy's birthrate.

Bonino told the AP by phone she was too busy on Tuesday preparing an appeal for a recount in the close race to discuss worries about civil rights. "Anyway, I already said all that" in the campaign. While campaigning, Bonino voiced concerns that Meloni would make access to abortion difficult.

Italy allows abortion on request in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or later if a woman's health or life is endangered.

As a young woman, Bonino, now 74, spearheaded successful drives in the 1970s to legalize both abortion and divorce, two rights that were aggressively opposed by the Vatican, which wields political influence in Italy.

Before the Sept. 25 election for Parliament, Meloni said she would respect the 1978 law, but would push for measures, such as economic help, for women who decide to give birth instead of aborting.

The law allows for health personnel to register as conscientious objectors so they won't have to perform abortions. In some regions, including one where Meloni's party governs, the percentage of objectors is so high that women are forced to travel to other parts of Italy to obtain an abortion, Bonino has noted.

Among others defeated by right-wing candidates was Monica Cirinna, a Democratic Party lawmaker behind the passage of a 2016 law legalizing same-sex unions. Italy had been the last holdout in Western Europe on that recognition, but Cirinna was thwarted in efforts to permit adoption by same-sex couples.

Alessia Crocini, who heads the Rainbow Families group advocating rights for LGBTQ families, called Meloni's victory "terrible news." Rights activists had expected it, "but when something like this materializes it becomes real, it is pretty shocking," she said.

"I have been an activist for a very long time and there are people who I do not know who are writing to me on Instagram, 'I am afraid,' 'I don't know what to do,' 'I am very worried, I want to cry.'"

Crocini claimed that Meloni's objective is "to break the LGBTQ movement."

Also defeated was Democratic Party Senator Emanuele Fiano. The son of a survivor from the Auschwitz death camp during World War II, Fiano has battled against the rise of neo-fascist political movements. The recipients of antisemitic threats, Fiano has a police escort.

Besting him in a Senate district race in a Milan suburb was Isabella Rauti, a Brothers of Italy senator whose late father, Pino Rauti, help found the Italian Social Movement, a party nostalgic for fascism formed just after the end of the war.

Meloni ignored a demand by Holocaust survivor Liliana Segre, who is a senator-for-life, to remove from her party's symbol the flame in the three colors of the Italian flag that belonged to the Italian Social Movement. Meloni tweeted she was proud of her party's symbol. She has decried the anti-Jewish laws of Benito Mussolini's fascist regime.

Wednesday's marches, taking place in cities across Italy, are being organized by civil rights groups under the banner "Ready? Furious!" They are demanding that abortion rights remain in place.

**Cuba in the dark after Hurricane Ian knocks out power grid**

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BY ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba remained in the dark early Wednesday after Hurricane Ian knocked out its power grid and devastated some of the country's most important tobacco farms when it hit the island's western tip as a major storm.

Authorities were working overnight to gradually restore service to the country's 11 million people, according to a statement from Cuba's Electric Union. Power was initially knocked out to about 1 million people in Cuba's western provinces, but later the entire grid collapsed.

Ian hit a Cuba that has been struggling with an economic crisis and has faced frequent power outages in recent months. It made landfall as a Category 3 storm on the island's western end, devastating Pinar del Río province, where much of the tobacco used for Cuba's iconic cigars is grown.

Tens of thousands of people were evacuated and others fled the area ahead of the arrival of Ian, which caused flooding, damaged houses and toppled trees. Authorities were still assessing the damage, although no fatalities had been reported by Tuesday night.

Ian's winds damaged one of Cuba's most important tobacco farms in La Robaina.

"It was apocalyptic, a real disaster," said Hirochi Robaina, owner of the farm that bears his name and that his grandfather made known internationally.

Robaina, also the owner of the Finca Robaina cigar producer, posted photos on social media of wood-and-thatch roofs smashed to the ground, greenhouses in rubble and wagons overturned.

State media said Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel visited the affected region.

"Being in the hurricane was terrible for me, but we are here alive," said Pinar del Rio resident Yusimí Palacios, who asked authorities for a roof and a mattress.

Officials had set up 55 shelters and took steps to protect crops, especially tobacco.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Cuba suffered "significant wind and storm surge impacts" when the hurricane struck with top sustained winds of 125 mph (205 kph).

Ian was expected to get even stronger over the warm Gulf of Mexico, reaching top winds of 130 mph (209 kph) approaching the southwestern coast of Florida, where 2.5 million people were ordered to evacuate.

As the storm's center moved into the Gulf, scenes of destruction emerged in Cuba. Authorities were still assessing the damage in its world-famous tobacco belt.

Local government station TelePinar reported heavy damage at the main hospital in Pinar del Rio city, tweeting photos of collapsed ceilings and downed trees. No deaths were reported.

Videos on social media showed downed power lines and cut off roads in the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Artemisa and Mayabeque. A hospital in Pinar del Río was damaged.

"The town is flooded," said farmer Andy Muñoz, 37, who lives in Playa Cajío in Artemisa.

He said many people lost their belongings due to the storm surge.

"I spent the hurricane at home with my husband and the dog. The masonry and zinc roof of the house had just been installed. But the storm tore it down," said Mercedes Valdés, who lives along the highway connecting Pinar del Río to San Juan y Martínez. "We couldn't rescue our things ... we just ran out."

## Iran's anti-veil protests draw on long history of resistance

By AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY Associated Press

A young woman climbs to the top of a car in the middle of Mashhad, a conservative Iranian city famed for its Islamic shrines. She takes off her headscarf and starts chanting, "Death to the dictator!" Protesters nearby join in and cars honk in support.

For many Iranian women, it's an image that would have been unthinkable just a decade ago, said Fateh Shams, who grew up in Mashhad.

"When you see Mashhad women coming to the streets and burning their veils publicly, this is really a revolutionary change. Iranian women are putting an end to a veiled society and the compulsory veil," she said.

Iran has seen multiple eruptions of protests over the past years, many of them fueled by anger over

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economic difficulties. But the new wave is showing fury against something at the heart of the identity of Iran's cleric-led state: the compulsory veil.

Iran's Islamic Republic requires women to cover up in public, including wearing a "hijab" or headscarf that is supposed to completely hide the hair. Many Iranian women, especially in major cities, have long played a game of cat-and-mouse with authorities, with younger generations wearing loose scarves and outfits that push the boundaries of conservative dress.

That game can end in tragedy. A 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, was arrested by morality police in the capital Tehran and died in custody. Her death has sparked nearly two weeks of widespread unrest that has reached across Iran's provinces and brought students, middle-class professionals and working-class men and women into the streets.

Iranian state TV has suggested that at least 41 protesters and police have been killed. An Associated Press count of official statements by authorities tallied at least 13 dead, with more than 1,400 demonstrators arrested.

A young woman in Tehran, who said she has continually participated in the past week's protests in the capital city, said the violent response of security forces had largely reduced the size of demonstrations.

"People still are coming to the streets to find one meter of space to shout their rage but they are immediately and violently chased, beaten and taken into custody, so they try to mobilize in four- to five-person groups and once they find an opportunity they run together and start to demonstrate," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The most important protest they (Iranian women) are doing right now is taking off their scarves and burning them," she added. "This is a women's movement first of all, and men are supporting them in the backline."

A writer and rights activist since her student days at Tehran University, Shams participated in the mass anti-government protests of 2009 before having to flee Iran.

But this time is different, she said.

Waves of violent repression against protests in the past 13 years "have disillusioned the traditional classes of society" that once were the backbone of the Islamic Republic, said Shams, who now lives in the United States.

The fact that there have been protests in conservative cities like Mashhad or Qom — the historic center of Iran's clergy — is unprecedented, she said.

"Every morning I wake up and I think, is this actually happening? Women making bonfires with veils?"

Modern Iranian history has been full of unexpected twists and turns.

Iranian women who grew up before the overthrow of the monarchy in 1979 remember a country where women were largely free to choose how they dressed.

People of all stripes, from leftists to religious hardliners, participated in the revolution that toppled the shah. But in the end, it was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his followers who ended up seizing power and creating a Shiite cleric-led Islamic state.

On March 7, 1979, Khomeini announced that all women must wear hijab. The very next day — International Women's Day — tens of thousands of unveiled women marched in protest.

"It was really the first counter-revolutionary movement," said Susan Maybud, who participated in those marches and was then working as a news assistant with the foreign press. "It wasn't just about the hijab, because we knew what was next, taking away women's rights." She didn't even own a hijab at the time, she recalled.

"What you're seeing today is not something that just happened. There's been a long history of women protesting and defying authority" in Iran.

The hijab has been "the lightning rod of opposition," explained Roham Alvandi, an Iranian historian and associate professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

"It represents the ability of the Islamic Republic to reach down and control the most private and intimate aspects of Iranians' lives," he said.



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A century or more ago, strict veiling was largely limited to Iran's upper classes. Most women were in rural areas and worked, "so hijab wasn't exactly possible" for them, said Esha Momeni, an Iranian activist and scholar affiliated with UCLA's Gender Studies Department.

Many women wore a "roosari" or casual headscarf that was "part of traditional clothing rather than having a very religious meaning to it."

Throughout the late 19th century, women were front-and-center in street protests, she said. In Iran's first democratic uprising of 1905, many towns and cities formed local women's rights committees.

This was followed by a period of top-down secularizing reforms under the military officer-turned-king Reza Shah, who banned the wearing of the veil in public in the 1930s.

During the Islamic Revolution, women's hijab became an important political symbol of the country "entering this new Islamic era," Momeni said. Growing up in Tehran, she remembers "living between two worlds" where family and friends didn't wear the veil at private gatherings but feared harassment or arrest by police or pro-government militias in public.

In 2008, Momeni was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for a month at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, after working on a documentary about women activists and the 1 Million Signatures Campaign that aimed to reform discriminatory laws against women. She was later released and joined the 2009 "Green Movement" protests.

Like Shams, she sees today's wave of protests as shaking the foundations of the Islamic Republic.

"People are done with the hope of internal reform. People not wanting hijab is a sign of them wanting the system to change fundamentally," Momeni said.

The 2009 protests were led by Iran's "reformist" movement which called for a gradual opening-up of Iranian society. But none of Iran's political parties — even the most progressive, reformist-led ones — supported abolishing the compulsory veil.

Shams, who grew up in relatively religious family and sometimes wore hijab, recounted how during the 2009 protests, she renounced the headscarf publicly. She found herself under attack by pro-government media, but also shunned by figures in the reform movement — and by her then-husband's family.

"The major reason for our divorce was compulsory hijab," she said.

As Iran has been besieged by U.S. sanctions and several waves of protests fueled by economic grievances, the leadership has grown insular and uncompromising.

In the 2021 presidential election, all serious contenders were disqualified to allow Ebrahim Raisi, a protégé of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, to take the presidency despite record low voter turnout.

The death of Mahsa Amini, who hailed from a relatively impoverished Kurdish area, has galvanized anger over forms of ethnic and social — as well as gender — discrimination, Shams said.

From Tehran's universities to far-flung Kurdish towns, men and women protesters have chanted, "Whoever kills our sister, we will kill them."

Shams says Iran's rulers have backed themselves into a corner, where they fear yielding on the veil could endanger the 44-year-old Islamic Republic.

"There is no way back, at this point. If the Islamic Republic wants to stay in power, they have to abolish compulsory veiling, but in order to do that they have to transform their political ideology," she said. "And the Islamic government is not ready for that change."

## **EXPLAINER: What's behind strained China-Japan relations**

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan and China on Thursday mark the 50th anniversary of the 1972 normalization of their ties, but there isn't much of a celebratory mood. Improved ties between Asia's two biggest economies are considered vital to the region's stability and prosperity, but they remain at odds over disputed East China Sea islands and China's growing military and economic assertiveness in the region.

Here are the key issues in the often strained relations between these powerhouse neighbors:

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## TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

A huge source of contention is an uninhabited group of Tokyo-controlled, Beijing-claimed East China Sea islands called Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. Japan insists that the islands, which once hosted a Japanese seafood factory, are part of its territory, both historically and by international law. China says they were stolen by Japan in 1895 and should have been returned at the end of World War II.

The disputed islands are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and undersea oil deposits, and Japan accuses China of suddenly making its territorial claims after the undersea resources were found in a 1969 United Nations report. The 1972 normalization communique did not deal with the issue, but the dispute intensified after Japan's government in 2012 nationalized the Senkaku islands, leading to violent protests across China. Chinese coast guard and fishing boats are regularly found in the area, routinely violating Japanese waters.

## FEAR OF TAIWAN EMERGENCY

Japan, along with its security ally the United States, has openly criticized increased Chinese activities in the South China Seas. Tokyo has also pushed for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. China claims Taiwan, a self-governing democracy, and has threatened to annex it by force if necessary.

With a U.S.-China trade war and naval tensions on the rise in the area, Japan is increasingly worried about Taiwan emergencies. China's increased joint military drills with Russia near Japanese coasts have also irked Japan. Tokyo is shifting its military posture toward southwestern Japan, including Okinawa and remote islands just east of Taiwan.

China staged major military drills in areas surrounding Taiwan in August in an angry response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Taipei visit, and fired five ballistic missiles into waters near Okinawa. Fear of conflict over Taiwan adds to Japan's urgent efforts to reinforce its military capabilities and boost its budget. Japan is currently revising its national security strategy, which is expected to call for the possession of preemptive strike capabilities that opponents say would violate the country's pacifist constitution.

With Japan's westernmost island just east of Taiwan, "It is increasingly difficult to see how a Taiwan military contingency would not affect at a minimum the waters and airspace around Japanese territory," said Amanda Hsiao, senior analyst for China at the Crisis Group.

## WARTIME HISTORY

The two countries were at war, starting with clashes in the 1930s, until Japan's defeat in 1945. Japanese atrocities during the Sino-Japanese war include the Rape of Nanking, the use of chemical and biological weapons and grisly human medical experiments in Manchuria, where Japan's imperial army had a secret biological weapons unit. Japan also brought nearly 40,000 Chinese laborers to Japanese mines and factories, where many died of malnutrition and abuse.

In the 1972 communique, China waived the right to war compensation, which some experts say was in exchange for Japan's apology and recognition of China as the only legal government. Japan, however, has provided official development aid totaling 3.6 trillion yen (\$25 billion) to China over the past four decades.

## YASUKUNI SHRINE

China consider Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine — which honors 2.5 million war dead, including convicted war criminals — as a symbol of Japan's wartime militarism. Beijing views visits by Japanese ministers and lawmakers to the Tokyo shrine as indicative of a lack of remorse over Japan's wartime aggression. China, along with South Korea, which Japan colonized from 1910-1945, routinely protests against such visits.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

As a top U.S. ally and a major trade partner with China, Japan is in a delicate situation and must balance its position between the two superpowers.

China has been more assertive about pressing other governments to embrace Chinese-led initiatives, including a trade group called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Japan, along with the

United States, is seeking ways to stand up to increasing Chinese economic influence in the region. Tokyo also wants to reinforce economic security with other democracies in areas such as supply chains and the protection of sensitive technologies, apparently as a counter to China.

Yasuo Fukuda, a former Japanese prime minister who is an active proponent of better ties with China, says friction between Japan and China largely stem from U.S.-China trade issues. "The question is if global trade works better by excluding China," he said.

## Top Pakistan diplomat urges flood aid, patience with Taliban

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pakistan's foreign minister says the international community should work with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, not against them, when it comes to combatting foreign extremist groups and the economic and humanitarian crises in that country — even as many U.S. officials say the Taliban have proved themselves unworthy of such cooperation.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan's top diplomat, spoke to The Associated Press in the final days of a trip to the United Nations General Assembly in New York and to Washington that has focused on trying to draw more world attention to unprecedented flooding that has one-third of his country underwater.

Unrelenting monsoon rains that scientists say are worsened by climate change have killed more than 1,000 people in Pakistan, caused tens of billions of dollars in damage and destroyed much of the country's staple food and commercial crops.

Pakistan is among many countries hardest-hit by climate change that have become increasingly outspoken in seeking more financial assistance from richer nations. Past and current economic and industrial booms of China, the United States and other leading economies are the biggest contributors to climate change, which is primarily caused by burning fossil fuels.

The roughly 30 million people in Pakistan reported to be displaced by the floods are "truly paying in the forms of their lives and their livelihoods for the industrialization of other countries," said Zardari.

"And justice would be that we work together" globally, "that we're not left alone, to deal with the consequences of this tragedy," he said.

Zardari is the son of a past Pakistani prime minister and a past president. He became foreign minister in April.

He met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday. The Biden administration on the same day announced another \$10 million in food aid for Pakistan, on top of more than \$56 million in flood relief and humanitarian assistance this year.

More broadly, however, the Biden administration and other governments of leading economic nations have delivered only a small part of the \$100 billion in annual aid they have pledged to help less-wealthy nations survive the droughts, rising seas and other disasters of climate change and switch to cleaner energy themselves.

"We expect the United States to be one of the leading players" in that, said Zardari, who also spoke approvingly of a nascent proposal out of the U.N. in which developed nations could cancel out existing debt as a form of climate aid.

"We've not yet seen — and that doesn't mean we won't see — the translation of this vision to practicalities on the ground" in terms of the overall climate aid, he said.

Zardari, who spoke to the AP on Tuesday at Pakistan's embassy, also gave contentious recommendations that the U.S. work more directly with Afghanistan's Taliban. Pakistan and the United States have shared widely varying amounts of cooperation against violent armed groups sheltering in Afghanistan over the decades. The U.S. long has been at odds with many Pakistani officials over sympathetic handling and support for the Taliban.

No country recognizes the Taliban, a group sanctioned as a terrorist organization that retook power by military force in August 2021, as Afghanistan's legitimate government. The United States and the international community at large have sought to deal with billions of dollars in frozen Afghan Central Bank funds,



to institute financial reforms, and to deliver badly needed aid to ordinary Afghans with minimal involvement by the Taliban.

"At the risk of hurting anyone's feelings, I think it's important to mention that these funds, it's not the Taliban's funds, it's not the Americans' funds. These are funds that belong to the people of Afghanistan," Zardari said.

Economic isolation and privation such as Afghanistan has experienced since the Taliban takeover only feed authoritarianism and extremism, he said. The best financial outcomes would work through existing institutions, now in Taliban hands, not through "some sort of parallel government."

Asked if he meant the U.S. needed to hold its nose and deal with Afghanistan's ruling power, Zardari said, "Pretty much."

Meanwhile, the U.S. discovery that the global leader of al-Qaida, Ayman al-Zawahiri, had taken up refuge in the heart of Afghanistan's capital since the Taliban had returned to power has left U.S. leaders condemning Taliban officials for alleged complicity. The U.S. killed Zawahiri in a drone strike in July.

The Taliban had yet to have the time and ability to grapple with extremist groups as a government should, Zardari said. "For them to demonstrate their will to take on terrorist organizations, we need to help them build their capacity to also do so" before judging them, he said.

## Pollution from Florida mining a concern with Hurricane Ian

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — The polluted leftovers of Florida's phosphate fertilizer mining industry, more than 1 billion tons in "stacks" that resemble enormous ponds, are at risk for leaks or other contamination when Hurricane Ian comes ashore in the state, environmental groups say.

Florida has 24 such phosphogypsum stacks, most of them concentrated in mining areas in the central part of the state. About 30 million tons of this slightly radioactive waste is generated every year, according to the Florida Industrial and Phosphate Research Institute.

"A major storm event like the one we are bracing for can inundate the facilities with more water than the open-air ponds can handle," Ragan Whitlock, staff attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity environmental group, said in an email Tuesday.

"We are extremely concerned about the potential impacts Hurricane Ian may have on phosphate facilities around the state," Whitlock added.

A leak in March 2021 at a stack called Piney Point resulted in the release of an estimated 215 million gallons of polluted water into Tampa Bay, causing massive fish kills. State officials, overseen by a court-appointed receiver, are working with a \$100 million appropriation to shut down that long-troubled location.

"During the past six months, the receiver has made significant progress toward closing the facility," lawyers for Gov. Ron DeSantis said in a court filing Monday.

But the Center for Biological Diversity, which sued with other groups to close down Piney Point, noted that 4.5 million additional gallons of wastewater were released into Tampa Bay in August.

"The imminent and substantial endangerment to the environment and human health and safety posed by Piney Point has not been abated" since a judge ordered a six-month stay in the case.

Hurricane Ian is expected to make landfall in southwest Florida on Wednesday before cutting through the state — very close to many of the gypsum stacks.

State Department of Environmental Protection records show that Piney Point has about 24 inches (60 centimeters) of rainfall capacity. Another facility in the Tampa Bay area, operated by phosphate giant Mosaic Co., has just over 9 inches (22 centimeters) of rainfall capacity.

A spill could seriously damage rivers and other wetlands near the stacks, according to Jim Tatum of the Our Santa Fe River nonprofit group.

"Valuable aquatic and vegetative resources never fully recover from a spill," Tatum wrote on the organization's website. "As the highly acidic, radioactive slime makes its way to the receiving waters, entire aquatic ecosystems are impacted."

A Mosaic spokeswoman did not respond to an email Tuesday seeking comment.

Phosphate has been mined in Florida since 1883. It's used mainly for fertilizer to produce food, animal supplements and a variety of industrial products. Land used in mining is required to be "reclaimed," or brought as close as possible back to its original state.

The byproducts that wind up in the stacks, however, have few uses acceptable to federal regulators. They can contain radioactive uranium, thorium and radium along with toxic metals such as barium, cadmium and lead, according to the environmental group ManaSota 88.

Fertilizers are made from phosphate rock that contains naturally occurring uranium and thorium, which decay to radium, and radium decays to the radioactive gas radon, the Environmental Protection Agency says. Class-action lawsuits have claimed health effects for people living near the mining waste.

"Phosphate companies have had over 70 years to figure out a way to dispose of radioactive gypsum wastes in an acceptable manner, but they have yet to do so," said Glenn Compton, chairman of ManaSota 88.

## Churches defend clergy loophole in child sex abuse reporting

By JASON DEAREN and MICHAEL REZENDES Associated Press

It was a frigid Sunday evening at the Catholic Newman Center in Salt Lake City when the priest warned parishioners who had gathered after Mass that their right to private confessions was in jeopardy.

A new law would break that sacred bond, the priest said, and directed the parishioners to sign a one-page form letter on their way out. "I/We Oppose HB90," began the letter, stacked next to pre-addressed envelopes. "HB90 is an improper interference of the government into the practice of religion in Utah."

In the following days of February 2020, Utah's Catholic diocese, which oversees dozens of churches, says it collected some 9,000 signed letters from parishioners and sent them to state Rep. Angela Romero, a Democrat who had been working on the bill as part of her campaign against child sexual abuse. HB90 targeted Utah's "clergy-penitent privilege," a law similar to those in many states that exempts clergy of all denominations from the requirement to report child abuse if they learn about the crime in a confessional setting.

Utah's Catholic leaders had mobilized against HB90 arguing that it threatened the sacred privacy of confessions. More importantly, it met with disapproval from some members in the powerful Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known as the Mormon church, whose followers comprise the vast majority of the state Legislature. HB90 was dead on arrival.

In 33 states, clergy are exempt from any laws requiring professionals such as teachers, physicians and psychotherapists to report information about alleged child sexual abuse to police or child welfare officials if the church deems the information privileged.

This loophole has resulted in an unknown number of predators being allowed to continue abusing children for years despite having confessed the behavior to religious officials. In many of these cases, the privilege has been invoked to shield religious groups from civil and criminal liability after the abuse became known to civil authorities.

Over the past two decades state lawmakers like Romero have proposed more than 130 bills seeking to create or amend child sex abuse reporting laws, an Associated Press review found. All either targeted the loophole and failed to close it, or amended the mandatory reporting statute without touching the clergy privilege amid intense opposition from religious groups. The AP found that the Roman Catholic Church has used its well-funded lobbying infrastructure and deep influence among lawmakers in some states to protect the privilege, and that influential members of the Mormon church and Jehovah's Witnesses have also worked in statehouses and courts to preserve it in areas where their membership is high.

In Maryland a successful campaign to defeat a proposal that would have closed the clergy-penitent loophole was led by a Catholic cardinal who would later be defrocked for sexually abusing children and adult seminarians.

In other states, such as California, Missouri and New Mexico, vociferous public and backroom opposition to bills aimed at closing the loophole from the Catholic and Mormon churches successfully derailed

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legislative reform efforts.

"They believe they're on a divine mission that justifies keeping the name and the reputation of their institution pristine," said David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, speaking of several religious groups. "So the leadership has a strong disincentive to involve the authorities, police or child protection people."

## LOOPHOLE PROTECTS CHURCHES FROM SURVIVORS AND PROSECUTORS

Last month, an AP investigation found that a Mormon bishop in Arizona, at the direction of church leaders, failed to report a church member who had confessed that he sexually abused his 5-year-old daughter. The AP found that Rep. Merrill Nelson, a church lawyer and Utah Republican lawmaker, had advised the bishop not to report the abuse to civil authorities because of Arizona's clergy privilege law, according to documents revealed in a lawsuit. That failure to report allowed the church member, the late Paul Adams, to repeatedly rape his two daughters and allegedly abuse one his four sons for many years.

In response to the case, state Sen. Victoria Steele, a Democrat from Tucson, on three occasions proposed legislation to close the clergy reporting loophole in Arizona. Steele told the AP that key Mormon lawmakers including a former Republican state senator and judiciary committee chairmen thwarted her efforts before her proposals could be presented to the full Legislature.

"It's difficult for me to tell this story without talking about the Mormons and their power in the Legislature," Steele said. "What this boils down to is that the church is being given permission to protect the predators and the children be damned. ... They are trying with all of their might to make sure this bill does not see the light of day."

Latter-day Saints and Catholics hold a number of influential positions as leaders and committee chairmen in the Arizona Legislature, including the speaker of the House, and have been known to advance or block legislation in line with the church's priorities and values.

In one high-profile example, two Republican legislators took a stand in 2019, refusing to vote for a budget until lawmakers passed a measure allowing past victims of child sexual abuse to sue churches or youth groups that turned a blind eye to the abuse. Legislative business ground to a halt for weeks amid fierce opposition from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Roman Catholic Church and insurers along with their allies in the Legislature, which finally approved the measure.

The Adams case is not the only example of the privilege being invoked in cases where a clergy member's failure to report led to prolonged abuse. In Montana, for example, a woman who was abused by a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the mid-2000s won a \$35 million jury verdict against the church for failing to report her abuse. But in 2020 the state Supreme Court reversed the judgment, ruling that church leaders were under no obligation to report, citing the state's clergy-penitent privilege.

The privilege can also be used to protect religious organizations from criminal liability. In 2013, a former Boise, Idaho, police officer turned himself in for abusing children, something he had reported to 15 members of the Mormon church, none of whom notified authorities. But prosecutors declined to file charges against the church because of Idaho's clergy-penitent privilege law.

The Mormon church said in a written statement to the AP that a member who confesses child sex abuse "has come seeking an opportunity to reconcile with God and to seek forgiveness for their actions. ... That confession is considered sacred, and in most states, is regarded as a protected religious conversation owned by the confessor."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops did not immediately return a request for comment about its campaigns against state bills seeking to do away with the clergy-penitent privilege.

But supporters of the clergy privilege say abolishing it will not make children safer. Some go so far as to say that the ability of abusers to report privately to clergy encourages them to confess and often leads to stopping the abuse.

"It's considered essential to the exercise of religion to have a priest-penitent privilege that will allow people to approach their clergy for the purpose of unburdening themselves, their mind, their soul ... to seek peace and consolation with God as well as with their fellow beings," Utah state Rep. Nelson told the AP. "Without that assurance of secrecy, troubled people will not confide in their clergy."



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Jean Hill, the government liaison for Utah's Catholic Diocese who helped organize opposition to Romero's bill, pointed to a single research paper to argue that laws that target privileged, confessional conversations in the context of child abuse have not increased reporting in those communities.

"When you take away every opportunity for people to get help, they go underground and the abuse continues," Hill said.

But the authors of the study Hill cited, published in 2014, have cautioned about reaching such conclusions based on their research.

Frank Vandervort, a law professor at the University of Michigan, and his co-author, Vincent Palusci, a pediatrics professor at New York University, told the AP that the study was limited, partly because churches often wouldn't give them access to data on clergy reporting.

"A single article should not be the basis for making policy decisions," said Vandervort, lead author of the study. "It may be entirely the case that there's no connection between the changing of the laws and the number of reports."

## PRIVILEGE NOT 'CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED'

Efforts to rid state laws of the privilege have been successful in only a handful of states, including North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas and West Virginia. Records and interviews with lawmakers in the 33 states that still have the privilege show that intense opposition from powerful religious organizations is more often too much to overcome.

Former California state Sen. Jerry Hill said a bill he introduced in 2019 to require clergy members to report suspicion of child sex abuse or neglect by co-workers was killed after opposition from the Catholic and Mormon churches, as well as other religious groups.

"The opposition of the Catholic Church was instrumental in creating a lot of controversy around the bill and a lot of questions related to religious freedom," Hill said. The Catholic Church made it clear it would sue if the bill passed, Hill said.

Michael Cassidy, a professor at Catholic-affiliated Boston College Law School and a former state prosecutor, said it's not clear how a religious freedom case regarding the clergy privilege would turn out.

Some supporters believe the privilege is securely rooted in the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion. But Cassidy said "there is no firm precedent that says the clergy-penitent privilege is constitutionally required."

"The Supreme Court has never held that," Cassidy said.

He's proposed a middle path: allow clergy to maintain the secrecy of the confessional but carve out an exception for "dangerous persons" including child sex abusers.

Often, legislative efforts to close the clergy loophole run up against lawmakers who are also church members, as well as intimidation from advocacy groups aligned with various religions. It's a one-two punch that has killed many bills quietly before they are even introduced, and has led to the privilege loophole being deemed by child welfare advocates as a poison pill included in mandatory reporting bills, the AP's review found.

In Utah, after religious officials publicly opposed her bill seeking to close the loophole, state Rep. Romero, a lifelong Catholic, received ominous voicemails and emails. Fearing for her staff's safety, she reported some of them to state law enforcement.

"It's utterly despicable that you think that this is all right," said one anonymous caller claiming to represent a group called Young Americans for Liberty. "If you care to, return my message. If not, I'm going to call you every day until you do."

The blowback also got personal: Devout Catholic members of Romero's own family stopped talking to her. "They thought I was trying to attack the Catholic Church and get rid of confession, one of our sacraments," Romero said. "That's how it was presented to them."

In 2003, as the Catholic clergy sex abuse scandal swept the nation, a bill seeking to rid Maryland of the privilege in child abuse cases evoked a strong rebuke from Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, then the powerful archbishop of the Diocese of Washington, D.C.

"If this bill were to pass, I shall instruct all priests in the Archdiocese of Washington who serve in Mary-

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land to ignore it," McCarrick wrote in a Catholic Standard column. "On this issue, I will gladly plead civil disobedience and willingly — if not gladly — go to jail."

The bill withered under McCarrick's attack and never emerged from committee. Similar legislation proposed in 2004 suffered the same fate. Today, the clergy-penitent privilege in Maryland remains intact, even though McCarrick has been defrocked for sex crimes.

Virginia updated its mandatory reporting law in 2006. While the bill started out with clergy among those listed as reporters with the privilege intact, they would be removed from the final bill. The privilege, oddly, was left in. The state went on in 2019 to add ministers, priests, rabbis and other religious officials to the list of mandatory reporters of child abuse, but again protected the clergy-penitent privilege.

State Del. Karrie Delaney, a Virginia Democrat who sponsored the bill in 2019 that added clergy to the list of mandated reporters, said that including language to close the privilege would have doomed the bill.

"We wanted to pass the bill," Delaney said. "And we knew that not having that (exemption) in there would have drawn an enormous amount of resistance from particular faith communities that really would have put the bill in jeopardy."

In heavily Catholic Pennsylvania, 40 bills have included changes in mandatory child sex abuse reporting laws over the past two decades. None of them has challenged the clergy-penitent privilege. That comes as no surprise to child sex abuse survivors and their advocates, who have seen the Catholic Church and its lobbyists spend millions in a battle in Pennsylvania over a proposed two-year legal window for survivors to file lawsuits against their alleged abusers.

In other states, legislators said they didn't know clergy had a way around reporting abuse. After learning of the loophole from the AP, Vermont state Sen. Richard Sears, a Democrat, said he would introduce a bill in the next legislative session to try to close it. "I wasn't even aware it existed," Sears said.

In 2003, amid the uproar over the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandals, several states added clergy to their child sex abuse reporting laws, often with the exception for clergy who learn about child sex abuse during spiritual confessions.

That's what happened in New Mexico.

With the privilege protected, the bill sailed easily through both houses and was even supported by The Archdiocese of Santa Fe, which was embroiled in its own church sexual abuse scandal.

Since then, there have been several bills introduced in the New Mexico Legislature aimed at clarifying language in the reporting law. Only one would have eliminated the clergy-penitent privilege. It died in committee.

"We have repeatedly asked the Legislature to strengthen reporting requirements in schools and religious institutions," state Attorney General Hector Balderas told the AP. He said unreported child abuse is a major problem "resulting in tremendous amounts of trauma."

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**Tiny Oregon town hosts 1st wind-solar-battery 'hybrid' plant**

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By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A renewable energy plant being commissioned in Oregon on Wednesday that combines solar power, wind power and massive batteries to store the energy generated there is the first utility-scale plant of its kind in North America.

The project, which will generate enough electricity to power a small city at maximum output, addresses a key challenge facing the utility industry as the U.S. transitions away from fossil fuels and increasingly turns to solar and wind farms for power. Wind and solar are clean sources of power, but utilities have been forced to fill in gaps when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining with fossil fuels like coal or natural gas.

At the Oregon plant, massive lithium batteries will store up to 120 megawatt-hours of power generated by the 300-megawatt wind farms and 50-megawatt solar farm so it can be released to the electric grid on demand. At maximum output, the facility will produce more than half of the power that was generated by Oregon's last coal plant, which was demolished earlier this month.

On-site battery storage isn't new, and interest in solar-plus-battery projects in particular has soared in the U.S. in recent years due to robust tax credits and incentives and the falling price of batteries. The Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility in Oregon, however, is the first in the U.S. to combine integrated wind, solar and battery storage at such a large scale in one location, giving it even more flexibility to generate continuous output without relying on fossil fuels to fill in the gaps.

The project is "getting closer and closer to having something with a very stable output profile that we traditionally think of being what's capable with a fuel-based generation power plant," said Jason Burwen, vice president of energy storage at the American Clean Power Association, an advocacy group for the clean power industry.

"If the solar is chugging along and cloud cover comes over, the battery can kick in and make sure that the output is uninterrupted. As the sun goes down and the wind comes online, the battery can make sure that that's very smooth so that it doesn't, to the grid operator, look like anything unusual."

The plant located in a remote expanse three hours east of Portland is a partnership between NextEra Energy Resources and Portland General Electric, a public utility required to reduce carbon emissions by 100% by 2040 under an Oregon climate law passed last year, one of the most ambitious in the nation.

PGE's customers are also demanding green power — nearly a quarter-million customers receive only renewable energy — and the Wheatridge project is "key to that decarbonization strategy," said Kristen Sheeran, PGE's director of sustainability strategy and resource planning.

Under the partnership, PGE owns one-third of the wind output and purchases all the facility's power for its renewable energy portfolio. NextEra, which developed the site and operates it, owns two-thirds of the wind output and all of the solar output and storage.

"The mere fact that many other customers are looking at these types of facilities gives you a hint at what we think could be possible," said David Lawlor, NextEra's director of business development for the Pacific Northwest. "Definitely customers want firmer generation, starting with the battery storage in the back."

Large-scale energy storage is critical as the U.S. shifts to more variable power sources like wind and solar, and Americans can expect to see similar projects across the country as that trend accelerates. National Renewable Energy Laboratory models show U.S. storage capacity may rise fivefold by 2050, yet experts say even this won't be enough to prevent extremely disruptive climate change.

Batteries aren't the only solution that the clean energy industry is trying out. Pumped storage generates power by sending huge volumes of water downhill through turbines and others are experimenting with forcing water underground and holding it there before releasing it to power turbines.

But interest in batteries for clean energy storage has grown dramatically in recent years at the same time that the cost of batteries is falling and the technology itself is improving, boosting interest in hybrid plants, experts say.

Generating capacity from hybrid plants increased 133% between 2020 and 2021 and by the end of last year, there were nearly 8,000 megawatts of wind or solar generation connected to storage, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, which is managed by the Uni-



versity of California.

The vast majority of such projects are solar power with battery storage, largely because of tax credits, but projects in the pipeline include offshore wind-plus-battery, hydroelectric-plus-battery and at least nine facilities like the one in Oregon that will combine solar, wind and storage. Projects in the pipeline between 2023 and 2025 include ones in Washington, California, Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Illinois and Oregon, according to Berkeley Lab.

Many researchers and pilots are working on alternatives to lithium ion batteries, however, largely because their intrinsic chemistry limits them to around four hours of storage and a longer duration would be more useful.

"There is no silver bullet. There's no model or prototype that's going to meet that entire need ... but wind and solar will certainly be in the mix," said PGE's Sheeran.

"This model can become a tool for decarbonization across the West as the whole country is driving toward very ambitious climate reduction goals."

## Progressive Democrats frustrated with 2022 primary losses

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With less than two months until the midterm elections, progressive Democrats are facing a test of their power.

Their party is heading into the final stretch of the campaign with a robust set of legislative accomplishments that include long-term progressive priorities on issues ranging from prescription drug prices to climate change. But the left has also faced a series of disappointments as Democratic voters from Ohio to Illinois to Texas rejected high-profile progressive challengers to moderates or incumbent members of Congress during the primary season.

The frustration is particularly acute in New York, where Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez defeated one of the highest-ranking congressional Democrats four years ago, injecting fresh energy among the party's most liberal voters. This year, however, New York City Democrats chose Dan Goldman, a former federal prosecutor who is more of a centrist, over several progressive rivals, including freshman Rep. Mondaire Jones. About 30 miles north in the Hudson River Valley, a powerful establishment candidate, Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, defeated a state lawmaker running to his left and backed by Ocasio-Cortez.

Those setbacks have raised fresh questions about the progressive movement's standing among Democrats. Progressive leaders urge against reading too much into those losses, particularly in New York, where repeated elections this summer after a redistricting battle left some voters disoriented or disengaged.

"New York was just a mess," said Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal, chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. "It was like the timing of the redistricting maps. I mean, that's not a situation that's going to get repeated a lot."

Progressives have notched notable victories this year. In Oregon, Jamie McLeod-Skinner ousted moderate Rep. Kurt Schrader. Activist Maxwell Alejandro Frost topped a crowded field of Democrats in Florida and is poised to become the youngest member of Congress. And labor organizer Summer Lee edged out an establishment-backed candidate in Pennsylvania.

But those wins risk becoming the exception rather than the rule as moderates have repeatedly asserted their strength in recent years. President Joe Biden won his party's nomination in 2020 after overcoming challenges from more liberal contenders including Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

In New York City, Eric Adams defeated several rivals from the left for the party's mayoral nomination last year with an explicit critique of progressives, including Ocasio-Cortez. And New York Gov. Kathy Hochul easily dispatched a more liberal rival during this summer's primary.

"Progressive" has long been a squishy label for Democrats. It generally refers to the party's left flank but has been embraced by rank-and-file liberals as well as those much further left on the spectrum, including self-described democratic socialists like Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders.

The term "progressive" was even the subject of the first 2016 Democratic presidential debate between

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Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, with Sanders suggesting Clinton was not sufficiently progressive and Clinton disputing that and calling him the "self-proclaimed gatekeeper for progressivism." Some candidates championed by progressives have grappled with the label this year.

"No, I'm just a Democrat," left-leaning Pennsylvania Senate candidate John Fetterman said in a May interview with NBC when he was asked if he is a progressive. He said his positions were considered progressive six years ago but "now there isn't a single Democrat in this race or any race that I'm aware of that's running on anything different. So that's not really progressive. That's just where the party is."

Texas Rep. Jasmine Crockett, who won a Democratic congressional primary in May and was endorsed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus, told Politico that she'd been labeled a progressive but knows most of the Democratic voters in the Dallas-area seat where she's running identify as moderates or conservatives.

Crockett said that means she won't align with members of the further-left subset of progressives in the House known as the "Squad," which includes Ocasio-Cortez and has been known for challenging the party's establishment.

"I've got to be very cognizant. Honestly, I love so many members of the 'Squad' and I think that they do right by their districts," Crockett said. "I think in my district, while they don't self-identify as progressive, they love a lot of the things that I stand for."

New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, the chair of the House Democratic caucus and a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said "there's a difference between the socialist machine and mainstream progressives."

Jeffries, speaking to reporters in a roundtable interview a few days before New York's August primaries, said Democrats whose legislative records are "deeply progressive" still face criticism from "online virtue signalers" because they are not further left.

"There are some forces on the left that want to define 'progressive' as 'You bend the knee and we tell you what to do, and if you fail to fall in line, you're a machine Democrat or a corporate sellout.' That's a joke," he said.

Jeffries said the left had some success taking out more traditional Democrats in 2018 and 2020 as Democratic frustrations with President Donald Trump translated into energy for insurgent campaigns. But Jeffries said that once Biden won the White House and his Democratic-controlled Congress began passing legislation, Democratic voters were no longer looking for insurgency.

"At a certain point in time, voters want results, particularly when Democrats have been entrusted with majorities," he said. "And that is what we have been delivering."

Bill Neidhardt, a progressive Democratic strategist who worked for liberal former New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, said that while there have been noted losses in recent contests, the Democratic Party's left flank has seen bright spots.

"It's not a perfect record, but it never is in elections. I would challenge anyone to show me one of those," Neidhardt said.

Neidhardt said progressives in Congress can point to growing political power, such as Biden's recent student loan debt forgiveness plan or Democrats' new law, the Inflation Reduction Act, tackling climate change and capping prescription drug costs.

"That's got the progressives' fingerprints all over it," he said.

Though Fetterman has shrugged off the progressive label, Neidhardt said the Pennsylvanian opposing Republican Mehmet Oz might help progressives see one of their biggest coups yet. Fetterman and Wisconsin Senate candidate Mandela Barnes are running in two hotly contested U.S. Senate seats that Democrats hope to flip while hanging onto their thin majority in that chamber.

"Who's going to defeat Ron Johnson? Who's going to defeat Dr. Oz? It's going to be progressives," he said.

## Cuba without electricity after hurricane hammers power grid

BY ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Hurricane Ian knocked out power across all of Cuba and devastated some of the country's

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most important tobacco farms when it slammed into the island's western tip as a major hurricane Tuesday.

Cuba's Electric Union said in a statement that work was underway to gradually restore service to the country's 11 million people during the night. Power was initially knocked out to about 1 million people in Cuba's western provinces, but later the entire grid collapsed.

Ian hit a Cuba that has been struggling with an economic crisis and has faced frequent power outages in recent months. It made landfall as a Category 3 storm on the island's western end, devastating Pinar del Río province, where much of the tobacco used for Cuba's iconic cigars is grown.

Tens of thousands of people were evacuated and others fled the area ahead of the arrival of Ian, which caused flooding, damaged houses and toppled trees. Authorities were still assessing the damage, although no fatalities had been reported by Tuesday night.

Ian's winds damaged one of Cuba's most important tobacco farms in La Robaina.

"It was apocalyptic, a real disaster," said Hirochi Robaina, owner of the farm that bears his name and that his grandfather made known internationally.

Robaina, also the owner of the Finca Robaina cigar producer, posted photos on social media of wood-and-thatch roofs smashed to the ground, greenhouses in rubble and wagons overturned.

State media said Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel visited the affected region.

Cuba's Meteorology Institute said the city of Pinar del Río was in the heart of the hurricane for an hour and a half.

"Being in the hurricane was terrible for me, but we are here alive," said Pinar del Rio resident Yusimí Palacios, who asked authorities for a roof and a mattress.

Officials had set up 55 shelters and took steps to protect crops, especially tobacco.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Cuba suffered "significant wind and storm surge impacts" when the hurricane struck with top sustained winds of 125 mph (205 kph).

Ian was expected to get even stronger over the warm Gulf of Mexico, reaching top winds of 130 mph (209 kph) approaching the southwestern coast of Florida, where 2.5 million people were ordered to evacuate.

As the storm's center moved into the Gulf, scenes of destruction emerged in Cuba. Authorities were still assessing the damage in its world-famous tobacco belt.

Local government station TelePinar reported heavy damage at the main hospital in Pinar del Rio city, tweeting photos of collapsed ceilings and downed trees. No deaths were reported.

Videos on social media showed downed power lines and cut off roads in the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Artemisa and Mayabeque. A hospital in Pinar del Río was damaged.

"The town is flooded," said farmer Andy Muñoz, 37, who lives in Playa Cajío in Artemisa.

He said many people lost their belongings due to the storm surge.

"I spent the hurricane at home with my husband and the dog. The masonry and zinc roof of the house had just been installed. But the storm tore it down," said Mercedes Valdés, who lives along the highway connecting Pinar del Río to San Juan y Martínez. "We couldn't rescue our things ... we just ran out."

## Hurricane Ian strikes Cuba, Florida braces for winds, floods

By CRISTIANA MESQUITA and CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Hurricane Ian tore into western Cuba as a major hurricane Tuesday, knocking out power to the entire country and leaving 11 million people without electricity, before churning on a collision course with Florida over warm Gulf waters amid expectations it would strengthen into a catastrophic Category 4 storm.

Ian made landfall in Cuba's Pinar del Rio province, where officials set up 55 shelters, evacuated 50,000 people, and took steps to protect crops in the nation's main tobacco-growing region. The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Cuba suffered "significant wind and storm surge impacts" when the hurricane struck with top sustained winds of 125 mph (205 kmh).

Ian was expected to get even stronger over the warm Gulf of Mexico, reaching top winds of 130 mph (209 kph) approaching the southwest coast of Florida, where 2.5 million people were ordered to evacuate.



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Tropical storm-force winds were expected across the southern peninsula late Tuesday, reaching hurricane-force Wednesday — when the eye was predicted to make landfall. With tropical storm-force winds extending 140 miles (225 kilometers) from Ian's center, damage was expected across a wide area of Florida.

It was not yet clear precisely where Ian would crash ashore. Its exact track could determine how severe the storm surge is for Tampa Bay, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy. Landfall south of the bay could make the impact "much less bad," McNoldy said.

Gil Gonzalez boarded up his windows Tuesday and had sandbags ready to protect his Tampa home. He and his wife had stocked up on bottled water and packed flashlights, battery packs for their cellphones and a camp stove before evacuating.

"All the prized possessions, we've put them upstairs in a friend's house and nearby, and we've got the car loaded," Gonzalez said on his way out.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis urged people to prepare for extended power outages, and to get out of the storm's potential path.

"It is a big storm, it is going to kick up a lot of water as it comes in," DeSantis told a news conference in Sarasota, a coastal city of 57,000 that could be hit. "And you're going to end up with really significant storm surge and you're going to end up with really significant flood events. And this is the kind of storm surge that is life threatening."

He said about 30,000 utility workers have already been positioned around the state but it might take days before they can safely reach some of the downed power lines.

"This thing's the real deal," DeSantis said. "It is a major, major storm."

DeSantis said nearly 100 shelters had been opened by Tuesday afternoon, with more expected. He said most buildings in Florida are strong enough to withstand wind, but the 2.5 million people who have been told to evacuate face the greatest danger from flooding.

Hundreds of residents were being evacuated from several nursing homes in the Tampa area, where hospitals were also moving some patients. Airports in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Key West closed. Busch Gardens in Tampa closed ahead of the storm, while several Orlando-area theme parks, including Disney World and Sea World, planned to close Wednesday and Thursday.

NASA rolled its moon rocket from the launch pad to its Kennedy Space Center hangar, adding weeks of delay to the test flight.

Ian's forward movement was expected to slow over the Gulf, enabling the hurricane to grow wider and stronger. The hurricane warning expanded Tuesday to cover roughly 220 miles (350 kilometers) of Florida's west coast. The area includes Fort Myers as well as Tampa and St. Petersburg, which could get their first direct hit by a major hurricane since 1921.

Forecasters said the storm surge could reach 12 feet (3.6 meters) if it peaks at high tide. Rainfall near the area of landfall could top 18 inches (46 centimeters). They also reported a threat of isolated tornados being kicked up by the storm's approach across Florida.

"It's a monster and then there's the confusion of the path," said Renee Correa, who headed inland to Orlando from the Tampa area with her daughter and Chihuahua. "Tampa has been lucky for 100 years, but it's a little scary now."

Kelly Johnson was preparing to hunker down at her home two blocks from the beach in Dunedin, west of Tampa. She said she would escape to the second floor if sea water surges inland, and had a generator if power goes out.

"I'm a Floridian, and we know how to deal with hurricanes," Johnson said. "This is part of living in paradise — knowing that once in a while these storms come at you."

Forecasters warned the hurricane will be felt across a large area as it plows across Florida with an anticipated turn northward. Flash floods were possible across the whole state, and portions of Florida's east coast faced a potential storm surge threat as Ian's bands approach the Atlantic Ocean. Parts of Georgia and South Carolina also could see flooding rains into the weekend.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp pre-emptively declared a state of emergency Tuesday, ordering 500 National

Guard troops on standby to respond as needed.

As the storm's center moved into the Gulf, scenes of destruction emerged in Cuba's world-famous tobacco belt. The owner of the premier Finca Robaina cigar producer posted photos on social media of wood-and-thatch roofs smashed to the ground, greenhouses in rubble and wagons overturned.

"It was apocalyptic, a real disaster," wrote Hirochi Robaina, grandson of the operation's founder.

Local government station TelePinar reported heavy damage at the main hospital in Pinar del Rio city, tweeting photos of collapsed ceilings and toppled trees. No deaths were reported.

At the White House, President Joe Biden said his administration was sending hundreds of Federal Emergency Management Agency employees to Florida and sought to assure mayors in the storm's path that Washington will meet their needs. He urged residents to heed local officials' orders.

"Your safety is more important than anything," he said.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden spoke later Tuesday evening with DeSantis on federal steps to help Florida prepare for the storm and both committed to close coordination.

## Lawsuit says woman gave birth alone on Maryland jail floor

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

A woman who said she was left to give birth to her baby alone on the dirty, concrete floor of her jail cell in Maryland filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday alleging that jail nurses ignored her screams and pleas for help for six hours.

Jazmin Valentine alleges some nurses working for the jail's contracted medical provider, Pennsylvania-based PrimeCare Medical, Inc., said she was withdrawing from drugs, not in labor, and some jail staffers and medical staff laughed at her, saying she was just trying to get out of her cell late at night in July 2021 at the Washington County jail in Hagerstown.

Valentine claims she punched the walls of her solitary confinement cell, which did not have blankets or sheets, during her most painful contractions and removed what she believed was her baby's amniotic sac and slid it under her cell door to prove she was about to have a baby.

A fellow inmate, hearing Valentine's pleas, called Valentine's boyfriend, who called the jail pleading with staffers to help her, the lawsuit said.

The nurses also ignored a concern raised by a jail deputy about Valentine but he did not contact any superiors, the lawsuit said. He discovered Valentine holding the baby girl in her cell about 15 minutes after she was born just after midnight on July 4, 2021 and an ambulance was called to take them to the hospital, according to the lawsuit.

Because of the unsanitary conditions in the cell, the baby developed a type of staph bacteria infection that is resistant to many antibiotics, the lawsuit said.

Valentine, who had never given birth before, said she feared that her baby would die and she might bleed out while delivering her. But realizing that no one was going to help, she said she was determined to try to deliver the baby on her own.

"In my brain anything could happen," she said of her fears. "I felt like I was in the hands of the devil, honestly."

The lawsuit alleges that Washington County, Maryland, its sheriff department and sheriff, as well as nurses and deputies at the jail violated Valentine's rights under state law and the Constitution.

County spokesperson Danielle Weaver said the county had no comment. PrimeCare did not immediately return a telephone call seeking comment.

Valentine was over eight months pregnant when she was arrested for an alleged probation violation and taken to the jail the day before she went into labor, the lawsuit said. Valentine was released several days later and her baby is doing well, she said Tuesday.

The lawsuit is similar to one filed in 2019 by a woman who gave birth alone in Denver's jail the year before, claiming that nurses and deputies ignored her pleas for help for five hours. Surveillance video released then by the law firm representing Diana Sanchez, which is also representing Valentine, showed

her lying down on a narrow bed, crying out in pain and delivering a baby boy. The city eventually settled the lawsuit.

Following Sanchez's delivery, the Denver County Sheriff's Department, which runs the jail, said it changed its policy to ensure that pregnant inmates who are in any stage of labor are immediately taken to the hospital. Previously, decisions about whether to move a pregnant inmate were left to jail nurses but deputies were authorized to call for an ambulance for someone in labor.

David Lane, whose law firm is involved in both cases, said he believes they highlight problems both of privatizing health care behind bars and the attitudes of correctional administrators.

"As long as jail and prison administrators view inmates as animals these kinds of things will continue to happen," he said.

## Blasts precede Baltic pipeline leaks, sabotage seen likely

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, JAN M. OLSEN and DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Denmark believes "deliberate actions" caused big leaks in two natural gas pipelines running under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, and seismologists said powerful explosions preceded the leaks.

European leaders and experts pointed to possible sabotage amid the energy standoff with Russia provoked by the war in Ukraine. Although filled with gas, neither pipeline is currently supplying it to Europe.

"It is the authorities' clear assessment that these are deliberate actions — not accidents," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Tuesday.

But she added "there is no information indicating who could be behind it." Frederiksen rejected the suggestion that the incident was an attack on Denmark, saying the leaks occurred in international waters.

The incident overshadowed the inauguration of a long-awaited pipeline that will bring Norwegian gas to Poland to bolster the continent's energy independence from Moscow.

The first explosion was recorded early Monday southeast of the Danish island of Bornholm, said Bjorn Lund, director of the Swedish National Seismic Network. A second, stronger blast northeast of the island that night was equivalent to a magnitude-2.3 earthquake. Seismic stations in Denmark, Norway and Finland also registered the explosions.

"There's no doubt, this is not an earthquake," Lund said.

On Wednesday, Danish defense minister Morten Bødskov will travel to Brussels to discuss the leaks with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg.

Denmark's Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod said Sweden, Germany and Poland have been kept informed, and "we will inform and reach out to Russia in this case."

He said Denmark's foreign intelligence service didn't see any increased military threat against Denmark after the three leaks on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines.

They created a foamy white area on the water's surface, images released by Denmark's military show. Danish Energy Minister Dan Jørgensen said that "we cannot say how long the leak will go" on for as the gas has not been turned off. There was no indication when the gas would be turned off.

The German operator of the pipelines, Nord Stream AG, said it's preparing a survey to assess the damage.

"Currently, it is not possible to estimate a timeframe for restoring the gas transport infrastructure," a company statement said. "The causes of the incident will be clarified as a result of the investigation."

In Sweden, acting Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said "it is probably a case of sabotage," but not an attack on Sweden.

Andersson added that neighboring oil-rich Norway "has informed us about increased drone activity in the North Sea and the measures they have taken in connection with it."

Foreign Minister Ann Linde said that Sweden "(is) not ruling out any scenarios and we will not speculate about motive or actor."

The escaped natural gas is made up almost entirely of methane — the second biggest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide. David Hastings, a retired chemical oceanographer in Gainesville,



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Florida, said much of the gas would rise through the sea and enter the atmosphere. "There is no question that the largest environmental impact of this is to the climate, because methane is a really potent greenhouse gas," he said.

According to United Nations data, methane is 82.5 times worse for the climate than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period, because it so effectively absorbs the heat of the sun.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called the events "an act of sabotage." During a ceremony in northwestern Poland, Morawiecki, Denmark's Frederiksen and Polish President Andrzej Duda symbolically opened the valve of a yellow pipe belonging to the Baltic Pipe, a new system sending Norwegian gas across Denmark to Poland.

"The era of Russian domination in the gas sphere is coming to an end," Morawiecki declared. "An era that was marked by blackmail, threats and extortion."

No official presented evidence of what caused the leaks, but with distrust of Russia running high, some feared Moscow sabotaged its own infrastructure out of spite or to warn that pipelines are vulnerable to attack. The leaks raised the stakes on whether energy infrastructure was being targeted and led to a small bump in natural gas prices.

"We can clearly see that this is an act of sabotage, an act that probably means a next step of escalation in the situation that we are dealing with in Ukraine," Morawiecki said.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod about the apparent sabotage, according to State Department spokesperson Ned Price, who reiterated the U.S. was committed to promoting European energy security.

Anders Puck Nielsen, a researcher with the Center for Maritime Operations at the Royal Danish Defence College, said the timing of the leaks was "conspicuous" given the ceremony for the Baltic Pipe. He said perhaps someone sought "to send a signal that something could happen to the Norwegian gas."

The extent of the damage means the Nord Stream pipelines are unlikely to be able to carry any gas to Europe this winter even if there was political will to bring them online, analysts at the Eurasia Group said. Russia has halted flows on the 1,224-kilometer (760-mile) Nord Stream 1 pipeline during the war, while Germany prevented them from ever starting in the parallel Nord Stream 2.

"Depending on the scale of the damage, the leaks could even mean a permanent closure of both lines," analysts Henning Gloystein and Jason Bush wrote.

Puck Nielsen said of possible sabotage that "technically speaking, this is not difficult. It just requires a boat. It requires some divers that know how to handle explosive devices."

"But I think if we look at who would actually benefit from disturbances, more chaos on the gas market in Europe, I think there's basically only one actor right now that actually benefits from more uncertainty, and that is Russia," he said.

Asked if the leaks may have been caused by sabotage, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "no version could be excluded."

"This is an unprecedented situation that requires an urgent investigation. We are extremely worried by this news," he said in a conference call with reporters.

Danish and Swedish maritime authorities issued navigation warnings, and established a prohibited area for vessels. Ships may lose buoyancy, and there may also be a risk of ignition above the water and in the air.

The Nord Stream pipelines have been at the center of an energy clash between Europe and Russia since the invasion of Ukraine in late February. Plunging Russian gas supplies have caused prices to soar, pressuring governments to help ease the pain of sky-high energy bills for households and businesses as winter nears. The crisis also has raised fears of rationing and recession.

The Baltic Pipe is a prominent element in the European Union's search for energy security and is to start bringing Norwegian gas through Denmark and along the Baltic Sea to Poland on Oct. 1.

Simone Tagliapietra, an energy expert with the Bruegel think tank in Brussels, speculated that the leaks could have been caused by Russian sabotage or anti-Russian sabotage.

One possibility is Russia signaling it "is breaking forever with Western Europe and Germany" as Poland

inaugurates its pipeline with Norway, he said.

"In any case, this is a stark reminder of the exposure to risk of Europe's gas infrastructure," Tagliapietra said.

## VP Harris seeks computer chip partners in Japan meetings

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Armed with a new law that boosts U.S. support for computer chip manufacturing, Vice President Kamala Harris said the administration was looking for new investments and partnerships as she sat down with Japanese technology executives on Wednesday.

The morning meeting on her last full day in Tokyo reflects the administration's focus on boosting semiconductor manufacturing and expanding the supply chain for critical materials.

The economy's vulnerability to disruptions in the flow of computer chips was revealed during the pandemic, when a shortage helped increase costs and stall the assembly of cars and other products.

"The citizens and the people of our countries rely on products without even knowing sometimes how reliant those products are on semiconductor chips," Harris said during the meeting at the U.S. ambassador's residence.

With China investing in computer chips of its own, the U.S. is trying to increase its domestic semiconductor manufacturing while also working to solidify its technology relationships with South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Harris said the U.S. understands that "no one country can satisfy the globe's demand" and "it is important that we and our allies partner and coordinate in a way that allows us to grow and in a way that allows us to function at a very practical level."

Legislation signed by President Joe Biden, known as the CHIPS and Science Act, includes \$52 billion for grants and incentives for semiconductor companies, plus a 25% tax credit when they invest in U.S. facilities. There's also about \$200 billion over the next decade to support research programs.

Harris described the legislation as "a down payment on future American leadership," but she emphasized that "we see Japan as playing a very important and critical role."

Jimmy Goodrich, vice president for global policy at the Semiconductor Industry Association, "there's a big opportunity and significant space for future investment" involving Japan.

Although Japan was once a world leader in computer chip manufacturing, its status has eroded over the last two decades, and the country is increasingly worried about falling behind.

Much like the United States has done, Japan has set up its own fund to support semiconductor production. Out of \$4.3 billion, \$3.3 billion is being provided in subsidies for a new factory in Kumamoto, in the country's southwest.

The facility is slated to begin production by the end of 2024, and it's a partnership between the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., Sony Group and Denso.

The companies participating in the meeting with Harris include Tokyo Electron, Nikon, Hitachi High Tech Group, Fujitsu Limited, Micron and others.

When Biden was in Japan earlier this year, the two nations agreed to work together on computer chips, including through a joint group focused on developing more powerful technologies.

There are worries that if Japan is slow to act, the fruits of the Biden initiative may likely be snatched up by another, and more ready, Asian ally, South Korea.

Yasutoshi Nishimura, the Japanese minister for economy, trade and industry, has repeatedly stressed the U.S.-Japan alliance on semiconductors, as well as energy and other issues.

In recent meetings with U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and U.S. Ambassador Rahm Emanuel, Nishimura has promised to set up a facility for semiconductor chips research in Japan this year, and expand the partnership on semiconductors with other allies, including Europe and Taiwan.

Atsushi Sunami, who teaches at The National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, or GRIPS, in Tokyo, noted that the drawbacks to Japan tackling advanced semiconductor technology may be rooted in the

view that Japan should not get involved in defense studies.

That view stems from Japan's role in World War II and the prevalent pacifist views, both in Japan and in international circles, that came after its defeat. But Sunami stressed a quick rethinking was in order, and the U.S. moves, given the U.S.-Japan alliance, could be an opportunity for Japan.

"As the U.S.-China hegemonic competition escalates, how Japan hopes to position itself in the jockeying for international standards and rule-making, and the strategic formation of alliances among nations, as well as among companies, will be critically meaningful," he said in a report earlier this year.

## California murder suspect, teen daughter killed in shootout

By STEFANIE DAZIO and ROBERT JABLON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An abducted 15-year-old girl and her father — a fugitive wanted in the death of the teen's mother — were both killed amid a shootout with law enforcement Tuesday on a highway in California's high desert, authorities said.

San Bernardino County Sheriff Shannon Dicus did not specify whether Savannah Graziano was shot by the responding deputies or her father. Anthony John Graziano, 45, had allegedly killed his estranged wife the day before and abducted their daughter.

Investigators had issued an Amber Alert after Graziano fled. He was described as armed and dangerous.

A 911 caller reported seeing the suspect's Nissan Frontier around Barstow on Tuesday, according to the sheriff's department. Deputies located the pickup truck and chased it on the highway for around 45 miles (70 kilometers).

Throughout the chase, Graziano — and possibly his daughter as well — was "constantly shooting back at the deputies" through the truck's rear window, Dicus said.

The shooter put several rounds through a patrol car's windshield and later disabled a second pursuing vehicle, the sheriff said.

The pickup truck became disabled on the shoulder of a highway in the city of Hesperia, and the firefight ensued.

Dicus said the girl was wearing tactical gear as she exited a truck's passenger side and ran toward the sheriff's deputies. She fell to the ground amid the gunfire. The deputies did not initially realize it was the girl who was running toward them, Dicus said, because she was wearing a helmet and a military-style vest that can hold armored plates.

She was taken to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead shortly before noon.

Her father was found in the driver's seat and pronounced dead at the scene. A rifle was found inside the car.

One deputy was injured by shrapnel during the firefight, Dicus said.

Graziano allegedly killed Tracy Martinez, 45, on Monday morning in a domestic violence event in the city of Fontana, near San Bernardino, according to Fontana police Sgt. Chris Surgent.

Family members told investigators that the couple had been going through a divorce. Martinez was rushed to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

Fontana is about 35 miles (55 kilometers) south of Hesperia, on the other side of the in San Gabriel Mountains.

## Biden keeps US target for refugee admissions at 125,000

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday kept the nation's cap on refugee admissions at 125,000 for the 2023 budget year, despite pressure from advocates to raise it even higher to meet the need after falling far short of that target this year.

Refugees advocates have been pushing the Biden administration to do more to restore the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The more than four-decade-old program suffered deep cuts under the Trump administration, which slashed admissions to a record low of 15,000.



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After taking office, Biden quadrupled the number of refugee admissions permitted for the remaining months of the 2021 budget year. He then set the target at 125,000 for the 2022 budget year, which ends Sept. 30. But so far fewer than 20,000 refugees have been admitted.

That number excludes the roughly 180,000 Ukrainians and Afghans who came to the United States via a legal process called humanitarian parole that got them into the country more quickly than the traditional refugee program but only allows for stays of up to two years.

Refugees are provided a path to permanent residency. Their admissions are determined by the president each year, and federal funding for resettlement agencies is based on the number of people they resettle in a given year.

The 125,000 target "is justified by humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest," Biden stated in his presidential determination. Historically, the average has been 95,000 under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Biden earmarked 5,000 more slots for people from Europe and Central Asia for the 2023 budget year, making room to accommodate those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The largest number of slots — 40,000 — was set aside for refugees from Africa, followed by 35,000 from South Asia and 15,000 each from East Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Biden has struggled to restore the U.S. Refugee Program despite raising the numbers and removing bureaucratic barriers put in place by his predecessor, which slowed the process and led to a massive backlog.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, head of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, said the Biden administration must act now to improve the refugee program with the United Nations reporting a record 100 million people being displaced from their homes.

"It must ramp up and streamline overseas processing of refugee applications if this lifesaving program is to remain relevant amid an unprecedented global displacement crisis," she said in a statement.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement that "this ambitious target demonstrates that the United States is committed to rebuilding and strengthening the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program" through various means. He pointed to plans for a pilot program that is expected to get underway by the end of the year that will allow regular Americans to sign up to resettle refugees in their communities, much like U.S. citizens did in stepping up to help Afghans and Ukrainians over the past year.

Traditionally refugees are placed in communities by nine refugee resettlement agencies.

"Our refugee admissions program embodies the best of American values and the will to help those in need, and it will continue to provide access to resettlement as a lifesaving, durable solution," Blinken said.

## Hurricane Ian gets nasty quickly, turbocharged by warm water

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Hurricane Ian is quickly gaining monstrous strength as it moves over oceans partly heated up by climate change, just like 30 other Atlantic tropical storms since 2017 that became much more powerful in less than a day.

This turbocharging of storms is likely to become even more frequent as the world gets warmer, scientists say.

After getting 67% stronger in less than 22 hours from Monday to Tuesday, Ian is bearing down as a likely Category 4 hurricane that threatens to deliver a nightmare storm-surge to the Tampa Bay and southwest Florida regions.

Ian's rapid intensification occurred after it traveled over Caribbean waters that are about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) warmer than normal, largely because of climate change. Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said the warm water creates "a lot more rocket fuel for the storm."

Climate change has other effects. The build up of heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels is making storms slower and wetter. It exacerbates deadly storm surges through sea-level rise, worsens freshwater flooding and increases the proportion of monster Category 4 and 5 storms, like Fiona last week, several

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studies show.

The current hurricane season had been uncharacteristically mild until about a week ago because of dry air in the Atlantic. Yet while storms aren't necessarily more frequent, they are getting nastier because of global warming, experts say.

"In terms of impacts and climate change, yes, this season could be a harbinger of sort of what is to come," said University of Albany hurricane scientist Kristen Corbosiero. "But it's really hard to say that climate change has an impact on any one storm in terms of its formation or its individual intensity."

The National Hurricane Center defines rapidly intensifying storms as those that gain at least 35 mph in wind speed in less than 24 hours. Sudden changes can cause major problems for forecasters and emergency planners trying to help residents get out of harm's way.

In Ian's case, the meteorological conditions were so obvious that forecasters were warning about it days in advance.

While hurricane seasons fluctuate year-to-year, when looked at over 10-year intervals, there are roughly 25% more rapidly intensifying storms in the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific now than 40 years ago, according to an analysis of National Hurricane Center data by The Associated Press. From 2017 to 2021 there have been 30 rapidly intensifying storms in the Atlantic and 32 in the Eastern Pacific.

"That's a staggering statistic," said former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climate and hurricane scientist Jim Kossin, now with the private Climate Service, a risk analysis firm. "What used to be a very, very rare event obviously has not been rare lately."

A new yet-to-be-published study in a peer-reviewed journal shows that as hurricanes near the coast -- a danger point for people -- storms are intensifying more quickly than ever before, said Karthik Balaguru, a Pacific Northwest National Lab climate scientist who conducted the study. "It's more likely because of climate change," he said.

As water gets warmer at ever deeper levels, the rapid intensification of tropical storms will only accelerate.

"We're turning up the burner on a stove," said Kossin.

More powerful hurricanes hold more moisture, which makes them more explosive in the form of torrential rains and storm surges, experts say.

As if that weren't bad enough, research also shows that storms now tend to move more slowly, allowing them to dump more rain in one place, like 2017's Hurricane Harvey, which devastated parts of Louisiana and Texas.

While Ian is expected to slow near the Florida coast and dump huge amounts of rain it is not expected to be near Harvey's level of more than 50 inches.

As storms intensify more rapidly and more frequently, forecasters and emergency planners are given less time to help communities prepare for the worst.

Jefferson Parish, a region of 430,000 people west of New Orleans, got hit last year by Hurricane Ida. That storm's winds went from 80 mph (130 kilometers per hour) to nearly 140 mph (220 kilometers per hour) in 24 hours, leaving little time to evacuate residents.

"Time in preparing for a storm is your complete ally," said Joseph Valiente, the director of emergency management for Jefferson Parish.

Evacuating people ahead of big storms helps relieve the strain on city services, which ultimately helps a city recover faster, Valiente said.

## Jan. 6 panel delays hearing as Hurricane Ian aims at Florida

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol announced Tuesday that it had postponed a hearing scheduled for Wednesday as a hurricane hurtled toward the Florida coast.

The committee had planned to hold what was likely to be its final investigative hearing Wednesday afternoon, but members decided at the last minute to delay it as it became clear that Hurricane Ian was

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churning on a collision course toward Florida, where it was expected to strengthen into a catastrophic Category 4 storm.

"We're praying for the safety of all those in the storm's path," committee chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and vice chair Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., said in a statement Tuesday afternoon. "The Select Committee's investigation goes forward and we will soon announce a date for the postponed proceedings."

The committee had not yet provided a specific agenda for the Wednesday hearing, but Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said over the weekend it would "tell the story about a key element of Donald Trump's plot to overturn the election."

This week's hearing was intended to close the series of public hearings the nine-member panel embarked on in early June. Throughout eight hearings, the committee — comprised of seven Democrats and two Republicans — sought to show the American public in great detail how former President Trump ignored many of his closest advisers and amplified his false claims of election fraud after he lost the 2020 election to Joe Biden.

Some of the more than 1,000 witnesses interviewed by the panel — a number of them Trump's closest allies — recounted in videotaped testimony how the former president declined to act when hundreds of his supporters violently attacked the Capitol as Congress certified Biden's victory on Jan. 6, 2021. But the committee has said its work isn't done.

During the August recess, congressional investigators continued to interview witnesses, including several of Trump's cabinet members, some of whom had discussed invoking the constitutional process in the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office after the insurrection.

Cheney had previously said the committee "has far more evidence to share with the American people and more to gather."

There are also many questions surrounding the effort to overturn the election that remain unanswered as the committee goes into its final three months of work.

Panel members still want to get to the bottom of missing Secret Service texts from Jan. 5-6, 2021, which could shed further light on Trump's actions during the insurrection, particularly after earlier testimony about his confrontation with security as he tried to join supporters at the Capitol. Thompson said earlier this month that the committee has recently obtained "thousands" of documents from the Secret Service.

Last week, the committee was able to secure an interview with conservative activist Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, who's married to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Lawmakers want to know more about her role in trying to help Trump overturn the election. She contacted lawmakers in Arizona and Wisconsin as part of that effort.

And the last, but possibly most consequential decision left on the committee's plate is how aggressively to pursue testimony from Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence.

The panel will have to wrap up these loose ends by the end of the year, when the select committee status expires. If Republicans take the majority in November's elections, as they are favored to do, they are expected to dissolve the committee in January. So the panel is planning to issue a final report by the end of December that will include legislative reforms to help prevent future attempts to subvert democracy.

## **Kremlin announces vote, paves way to annex part of Ukraine**

By ADAM SCHRECK and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Kremlin paved the way Tuesday to annex more of Ukraine and escalate the war by claiming that residents of a large swath overwhelmingly supported joining with Russia in stage-managed referendums the U.S. and its Western allies have dismissed as illegitimate.

Pro-Moscow officials said all four occupied regions of Ukraine voted to join Russia. According to Russia-installed election officials, 93% of the ballots cast in the Zaporizhzhia region supported annexation, as did 87% in the Kherson region, 98% in the Luhansk region and 99% in Donetsk. Possibly explaining the lower favorable vote in Kherson is that Russian authorities there have faced a strong Ukrainian underground resistance movement whose members have killed Moscow-appointed officials and threatened those who



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considered voting.

In a remark that appeared to rule out negotiations, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told the U.N. Security Council by video from Kyiv that Russia's attempts to annex Ukrainian territory will mean "there is nothing to talk about with this president of Russia."

He added that "any annexation in the modern world is a crime, a crime against all states that consider the inviolability of border to be vital for themselves."

The preordained outcome sets the stage for a dangerous new phase in Russia's seven-month war, with the Kremlin threatening to throw more troops into the battle and potentially use nuclear weapons.

The referendums asking residents whether they wanted the four occupied southern and eastern Ukraine regions to be incorporated into Russia began Sept. 23, often with armed officials going door-to-door collecting votes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to address Russia's parliament about the referendums on Friday, and Valentina Matviyenko, who chairs the body's upper house, said lawmakers could consider annexation legislation on Oct. 4.

Meanwhile, Russia ramped up warnings that it could deploy nuclear weapons to defend its territory, including newly acquired land, and continued mobilizing more than a quarter-million additional troops to deploy to a front line of more than 1,000 kms (more than 620 miles).

After the balloting, "the situation will radically change from the legal viewpoint, from the point of view of international law, with all the corresponding consequences for protection of those areas and ensuring their security," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday.

Many Western leaders have called the referendum a sham, and the U.N. Security Council met Tuesday in New York to discuss the voting, with the U.S. and Albania planning to introduce a resolution that says the results will never be accepted and that the four regions remain part of Ukraine. Russia is certain to veto the resolution.

The balloting and a call-up of Russian military reservists that Putin ordered last Wednesday are aimed at buttressing Moscow's exposed military and political positions.

The referendums follow a familiar Kremlin playbook for territorial expansion and more aggressive military action. In 2014, Russian authorities held a similar referendum on Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, under the close watch of Russian troops. Based on the voting, Russia annexed Crimea. Putin cited the defense of Russians living in Ukraine's eastern regions, their supposed desires to join with Russia, and an existential security threat to Russia as a pretext for his Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Putin has been talking up Moscow's nuclear option since Ukrainians launched a counteroffensive that reclaimed territory and has increasingly cornered his forces. A top Putin aide ratcheted up the nuclear rhetoric Tuesday.

"Let's imagine that Russia is forced to use the most powerful weapon against the Ukrainian regime that has committed a large-scale act of aggression, which is dangerous for the very existence of our state," Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of the Russian Security Council that Putin chairs, wrote on his messaging app channel. "I believe that NATO will steer clear from direct meddling in the conflict."

The United States has dismissed the Kremlin's nuclear talk as a scare tactic.

The referendums asked residents whether they want the areas to be incorporated into Russia, and the Kremlin has portrayed them as free and fair, reflective of the people's desire for self-determination.

Tens of thousands of residents had already fled the regions because of the war, and images shared by those who remained showed armed Russian troops going door-to-door to pressure Ukrainians into voting.

Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko, who left the port city after the Russians seized it after a months-long siege, said only about 20% of the 100,000 estimated remaining residents cast ballots in the Donetsk referendum. Mariupol's pre-war population was 541,000.

"A man toting an assault rifle comes to your home and asks you to vote, so what can people do?" Boychenko asked during a news conference, explaining how people were coerced into voting.

Western allies sided firmly with Ukraine, dismissing the referendum votes as a meaningless sham.

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said the ballots were "a desperate move" by Putin. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said while visiting Kyiv on Tuesday that France was determined "to support

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Ukraine and its sovereignty and territorial integrity” and described the ballots as “mock referendums.”

Elsewhere, trouble emerged for Putin in the mass call-up he ordered of Russians to active military duty.

The order has triggered an exodus of nearly 200,000 men from Russia, fueled anti-war protests and sparked violence. On Monday, a gunman opened fire in an enlistment office in a Siberian city and gravely wounded the local chief military recruitment officer. Scattered arson attacks had been reported earlier on other enlistment offices.

One destination of fleeing Russian men is Kazakhstan, which reported Tuesday that about 98,000 Russians have crossed into Kazakhstan over the past week.

The European Union’s border and coast guard agency says 66,000 Russian citizens entered the 27-nation bloc from Sept. 19 to 25, a 30% increase over the preceding week.

Russian officials tried to intercept some of the fleeing reservists on one of the main exodus routes, issuing conscription notices on the Georgian border. According to the state-run Tass agency, an enlistment task force was handing out notices at the Verkhniy Lars checkpoint, where an estimated 5,500 cars were lining up to cross. Independent Russian news sources have reported unconfirmed claims that draft-age men will be banned from leaving after the referendum.

As Moscow worked to build up its troops in Ukraine, potentially sending them to supplement its proxies who have been fighting in the separatist regions for the past eight years, Russian shelling continued to claim lives. Russian barrages killed at least 11 civilians and wounded 18 in 24 hours, Ukraine’s presidential office said Tuesday.

In other developments, Ukrainian authorities reported more success in their counteroffensive to reclaim territory in some of the very regions where Russia is staging the referendums to consolidate its grip.

Ukrainian troops claimed to continue their push beyond the Oskil River in the country’s east, pressing further into the Donbas. A video on social media Tuesday showed Ukrainian soldiers entering the village of Koroviy Yar, 15 kilometers (about 9 miles) from the river. Ukraine’s military intelligence said that the country’s forces continued to force Russian troops out of the northeastern Kharkiv region and claimed to recapture the major railway junction of Kupyansk-Vuzlovyi.

The war’s human toll was also reflected in a U.N. human rights monitoring mission’s first comprehensive look at violations and abuses Russia and Ukraine committed between Feb. 1 and July 31, the first five months of Russia’s invasion.

Matilda Bogner, the mission’s chief, said Ukrainian prisoners of war appeared to have faced “systematic” mistreatment, “not only upon their capture, but also following their transfer to places of internment” in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine and Russia itself.

The war has brought an energy crunch for much of Western Europe, with German officials seeing the disruption of Russian supplies as a Kremlin power play to pressure Europe over its support for Ukraine.

The danger to energy supplies grew when seismologists reported Tuesday that explosions rattled the Baltic Sea before unusual leaks were discovered on two underwater natural gas pipelines running from Russia to Germany. Some European leaders and experts pointed to possible sabotage during an energy standoff with Russia provoked by the war in Ukraine. The three leaks were reported on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, which are filled with natural gas but not delivering the fuel to Europe.

The damage means that the pipelines are unlikely to be able to carry any gas to Europe this winter even if the political will to bring them online emerged, analysts at the Eurasia Group said.

## Millions of Americans will save on Medicare fees next year

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time in a decade, Americans will pay less next year on monthly premiums for Medicare’s Part B plan, which covers routine doctors’ visits and other outpatient care.

The rare 3% decrease in monthly premiums is likely to be coupled with a historically high cost-of-living increase in Social Security benefits — perhaps 9% or 10% — putting hundreds of dollars directly into the pockets of millions of people.

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"That's something we may never see again in the rest of our lives," said Mary Johnson, the Social Security and Medicare policy analyst for The Senior Citizens League. "That can really be used to pay off credit cards, to restock pantries that have gotten low because people can't afford to buy as much today as they did a year ago and do some long-postponed repairs to homes and cars."

The 2023 decrease in monthly Medicare premiums comes after millions of beneficiaries endured a tough year of high inflation and a dramatic increase to premiums this year. Most people on Medicare will pay \$164.90 a month for Part B coverage starting next year, a savings of \$5.20.

The decrease helps to offset last year's \$21.60 spike, which was driven in large part by a new Alzheimer's drug, Aduhelm, administered intravenously in doctors' offices and introduced to the market last year with a \$56,000 price tag. Medicare set strict limitations on the drug's use earlier this year and the drugmaker has since cut the medication's cost in half.

Medicare paid less for that drug than it expected this year, helping shore up reserves that allowed the agency to set the Part B premiums lower for 2023, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare said in a statement Tuesday. Spending on other Medicare services and items was lower than expected, too. The annual deductible for the Part B program will also decrease \$7 to \$226.

President Joe Biden lauded the lower Medicare premiums during a Rose Garden speech Tuesday.

As the midterm elections near and Biden's administration struggles to contain the painful side effects of inflation, the White House has increasingly trumpeted its work around curtailing health care costs.

"(To) millions of seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare, that means more money in their pockets while still getting the care they need," Biden said.

Biden pointed to more cost savings on the way for some Medicare recipients starting next year thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, which will require Medicare to cover the cost of recommended vaccines for older Americans and will cap monthly insulin copayments at \$35 per month. Other provisions in the legislation, including a rule that allows Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies on the price of some medications, will take a few years to kick in.

The bill received no support from congressional Republicans, a talking point the White House has frequently pushed in speeches and across its social media accounts in recent weeks.

Republicans have a different slant on the subject.

"Desperation is setting in at the White House," the Republican National Committee said in response to Biden's speech Tuesday. "Voters have a clear choice in the midterms as they know Biden and the Democrats sent costs for groceries soaring, created a recession and increased taxes."

The lower Medicare premiums were announced as 66 million Americans await the announcement of next year's Social Security cost-of-living increase for 2023. Analysts estimate that it could be historic, roughly between 9% and 10%. The exact amount will be announced next month.

## Families testify of confrontations with Sandy Hook deniers

By DAVE COLLINS and PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

WATERBURY, Conn. (AP) — A mother who lost one of her sons in the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre testified Tuesday that her biggest fear is that people who believe the shooting was a hoax will harm her other son, who survived the attack at his school.

Nicole Hockley and her former husband, Ian Hockley, were the latest family members of the 26 victims of the school shooting to testify at the defamation trial of Alex Jones, where a jury is deciding how much the conspiracy theorist must pay for spreading the hoax lie.

Nicole Hockley said she's been called an actress and threatened with violence by people who have written to her that her 6-year-old son, Dylan, either never lived or never died.

She keeps knives and a baseball bat by her bed because she fears being attacked, and has taken out a large insurance policy in the event she is killed, she said.

"I got sent pictures of dead kids, because I was told that as a crisis actor, I didn't really know what a dead kid looked like, so this is what it should look like," she said.

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One piece of hate mail, she said, came from someone who cursed at her and her slain child and wrote, "We're going to extend an RIP greeting to you," with the words "rot in pieces" in parentheses. "I got a piece of mail telling me to slit my wrists before they did it for me," she testified.

Nicole Hockley said her biggest worry is what would happen if her now 18-year-old son, Jake, is confronted by similar threats, "that as a young man he won't know the right choice to make if he's approached, because of what that might do to him in terms of making him angry because someone is questioning his own life, questioning the life and death of his brother, his parents."

Earlier, Ian Hockley testified that he was ridiculed online as a "party boy" and an actor after posting a video of the memorial service for Dylan, because when he found the service uplifting, he smiled.

"That is what that video started to attract is people saying this must be fake," he said. "He's an actor. He's smiling. 'Oh, you're out of character,' all of those things started to appear until we took our video down."

He said it was "abominable" and "frightening" that the hoax lie was spread to millions of viewers of Jones' Infowars show.

Jillian Soto-Marino, the last witness of the day, testified she was accosted at charity 5K race for her sister, by Matthew Mills, a conspiracy theorist who had been a guest on Jones' Infowars show. Mills was arrested at the event for harassing Soto-Marino with allegations that her sister, first-grade teacher Vicki Soto, never existed. He was sentenced to two years probation.

"These lies have taken away my sense of security, my sense of safety," Soto-Marino said. "Things that are supposed to be joyful, you don't know what's going to happen."

Jones' attorney, Norm Pattis, had Soto-Marino acknowledge that Mills never mentioned Jones or said that he was sent by Jones. She also said she had never watched any video of Jones before the trial started and never received correspondence from Jones or his Infowars show. She said that as far as she know, Jones has never used her name.

Earlier in the trial, other relatives also gave often emotional testimony describing how they endured death or rape threats, in-person harassment and abusive comments on social media by people calling the shooting a hoax. Some moved to avoid the abuse.

Judge Barbara Bellis last year found Jones and his company liable by default for damages to plaintiffs without a trial, a consequence for what she called his repeated failure to turn over documents to their lawyers.

The jury of six will determine how much in damages Jones and Infowars' parent company, Free Speech Systems, should pay relatives of five children and three adults killed at the school, for saying the shooting didn't happen and inflicting emotional distress. An FBI agent who responded to the shooting also is a plaintiff.

Last week, Jones got into a heated exchange with plaintiffs' attorney Christopher Mattei, accusing the lawyer of "ambulance chasing" and saying he was done apologizing for claiming the shooting was staged. In recent years, Jones has acknowledged the massacre happened, but says the families of victims are being used to push a gun-control and anti-free speech agenda.

Outside the courthouse and on his Infowars show, Jones has referred to the proceedings as a "show trial" and a "kangaroo court" and called Judge Barbara Bellis a tyrant, posting an image of her with lasers shooting from her eyes.

On Tuesday, Bellis said she would refrain from issuing any gag orders against Jones, but said that could change.

Also during the trial Tuesday, the plaintiffs' lawyers played a video of a deposition earlier this year of a former Infowars producer, Nico Acosta, who said Jones "not infrequently" said things on his show he knew was false.

Acosta, who worked for the show from 2013 to 2018, said he left Infowars because he had "reached a saturation point with the toxicity," alleging a lack of ethics in how Jones covered stories. He said he didn't like the effect the content was having.

Bellis has ordered Jones not to mention in his testimony several topics, including free speech rights and his claims he only discussed Sandy Hook in a small percentage of his shows.



Defense attorney Norm Pattis is arguing that any damages should be limited and accused the victims' relatives of exaggerating the harm the lies caused them.

In a similar trial last month in Austin, Texas, home to Jones and Infowars, a jury ordered Jones to pay nearly \$50 million in damages to the parents of one of the children killed in the shooting, because of the hoax lies. A third such trial in Texas involving two other parents is expected to begin near the end of the year.

## Jan. 6 sedition trial underway for Oath Keepers leader

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jury selection began Tuesday in the trial of the founder of the Oath Keepers extremist group and four associates charged with seditious conspiracy, one of the most serious cases to emerge from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Amid complaints by attorneys for Stewart Rhodes and the others that they can't get a fair jury in Washington, the judge began winnowing the pool of potential jurors who will decide the fate of the first Jan. 6 defendants to stand trial on the rare Civil War-era charge.

The case against Rhodes and his Oath Keeper associates is the biggest test yet for the Justice Department in its massive Jan. 6 prosecution and is being heard in federal court not far from the Capitol. Seditious conspiracy can be difficult to prove, and the last guilty trial verdict was nearly 30 years ago.

Prosecutors have accused Rhodes of leading a weekslong plot to violently stop the transfer of presidential power from election-denier Donald Trump to Joe Biden that culminated with Oath Keepers dressed in battle gear storming the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Jury selection could take several days and the trial is expected to last at least five weeks.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta on Tuesday denied defense attorney's latest bid to move the trial out of Washington. The judge acknowledged that no juries have acquitted Jan. 6 defendants so far, but said that doesn't tell him about "bias or inherent bias of jurors in the District of Columbia."

The court already had dismissed more than two dozen potential jurors before Tuesday, including a journalist who had covered the events of Jan. 6. and someone else who described that day "one of the single most treasonous acts in the history of this country."

The judge disqualified several other people Tuesday based on concerns about their impartiality. One man recalled the fear and "trauma" that he experienced on Jan. 6. Mehta also disqualified a woman who said she used to work as a House staffer on Capitol Hill and still has many friends who work there.

"I was really afraid for their lives that day," she said.

Others excused from the jury pool include an attorney who questioned why hundreds of people have been charged with Capitol riot offenses when some of them appeared to him to be "just standing around." Another was a man who said he raised money for Biden's 2020 presidential campaign and expressed negative impressions of the Oath Keepers

Phillip Linder, an attorney for Rhodes, urged the judge to disqualify another man who said he has a close family friend who works for a House member and recalled watching livestreamed video of the Capitol attack. The judge called it a "close call" but declined to disqualify the man who said he could set aside what he has heard about the Oath Keepers.

Hundreds of people have already been convicted of joining the mob that overran police barriers, beat officers and smashed windows, sending lawmakers fleeing and halting the certification of Biden's electoral victory.

In a different court on Tuesday, a judge handed down one of the longest sentences so far in the riot. Kyle Young of Redfield, Iowa, was ordered to serve seven years in prison after he admitted to assaulting then-Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone.

Prosecutors will try to show that an Oath Keepers' plot to stop Biden from becoming president started well before that, in fact before all the votes in the 2020 race had even been counted.

On trial with Rhodes, of Granbury Texas, are Thomas Caldwell, of Berryville, Virginia; Kenneth Harrelson,

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of Titusville, Florida; Jessica Watkins of Woodstock, Ohio, and Kelly Meggs of Dunnellon, Florida.

Caldwell, a retired U.S. Navy intelligence officer and the only defendant released from jail ahead of trial, walked with a cane as he slowly entered the courthouse wearing a dark suit.

Authorities say Rhodes, a former U.S. Army paratrooper and a Yale Law School graduate, spent weeks mobilizing his followers to prepare to take up arms to defend Trump. The Oath Keepers repeatedly wrote in chats about the prospect of violence, stockpiled guns and put "quick reaction force" teams on standby outside Washington to get weapons into the city quickly if needed, authorities say.

On Jan. 6, Oath Keepers were captured on camera storming the Capitol in military-style "stack" formation. Rhodes isn't accused of going inside the Capitol, but phone records show he was communicating with Oath Keepers who did enter around the time of the riot and he was seen with members outside afterward.

Conviction for seditious conspiracy calls for up to 20 years behind bars. The last time prosecutors secured a seditious conspiracy conviction at trial was in 1995 in the case against Islamic militants who plotted to bomb New York City landmarks.

Three of Rhodes' Oath Keepers followers have pleaded guilty to the charge and are likely to testify against him at trial. Rhodes' lawyers have claimed those Oath Keepers were pressured into pleading guilty and are lying to get a better sentencing deal from the government.

On Tuesday, Rhodes' lawyers asked the judge to bar prosecutors and witnesses from using words such as "antigovernment" or "extremists" in describing the Oath Keepers to jurors, saying in court documents that it would "add nothing but prejudice into what already promises to be an emotionally charged trial."

Rhodes' attorneys have suggested that his defense will focus on his belief that Trump would invoke the Insurrection Act and call up a militia to support his bid to stay in power. Defense attorneys say Rhodes' actions in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6 were in preparation for what he believed would have been lawful orders from Trump under the Insurrection Act, but never came.

The defense has said that Oath Keepers were dressed in helmets and goggles to protect themselves from possible attacks from left-wing antifa activists and that the "quick reaction force" outside Washington was meant for defensive purposes if Trump invoked the Insurrection Act.

Nearly 900 people have been charged so far in the Jan. 6 riot and more than 400 have pleaded guilty or been convicted at trial.

Sentences for the rioters so far have ranged from probation for low-level misdemeanor offenses to 10 years in prison for a retired New York City police officer who used a metal flagpole to assault an officer at the Capitol.

## Paris Fashion Week showcasing 107 houses over 9 days

BY THOMAS ADAMSON AP Fashion Writer

PARIS (AP) — Paris is the center of the global luxury industry this week with Tuesday marking the first major day of ready-to-wear shows. Powerhouses Saint Laurent and Dior are among some 107 brands showcasing spring-summer 2023 collections at Paris Fashion Week. Here are some highlights so far:

### DIOR'S NOSTALGIC PALACE

Guests including Natalie Portman, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Rosamund Pike and Emma Raducanu looked curiously at a decaying palace recreated inside an annex of the Tuileries Gardens. Vines crept through Renaissance doors, over fading wooden cornices and down weathered columns to evoke the mystery of bygone times.

The brand explained: Based loosely on the Dior headquarters on Avenue Montaigne, the set was also inspired by Catherine of Medicis, the Renaissance queen who moved to the Tuileries in the 16th century. She had the famed gardens and a palace built on the site that has since been razed. Catherine also brought heels, corsets and Italian Burano lace to the French court — picked up by Dior designer Maria Grazia Chiuri in this thoughtful show of 84 looks, heavy on black and white.

Writhing dancers performed alongside ribbed corsets, high Renaissance waists and lashings of lace encircling the dusty palatial runway.

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Despite contemporary features such as sheeny fabrics and utilitarian toggles, Chiuri's aesthetic rarely strayed from the history books. And to sublime effect -- it made for Dior's strongest show in seasons.

Heavy (15)80's Renaissance ruching and ruffles ran down one skirt that was topped by a black "chain-mail" vest that could have been worn at the YMCA in the (19)80's. A LBD was gloriously anachronistic with a skirt that ballooned out like the top of a full skirt, but reined in with sporty toggles.

## BOTTER'S STOMPING SNEAKERS

Sartorial met the aquatic on Tuesday at Botter's co-ed show of crisp lapels, boxy jackets and poetical cutaways. They graced brightly colored suits.

Statement stomping sneakers — again, in vivid colors — provided contrasts with trendy suit-ware sometimes sporting marbled lines to evoke sea creatures' tentacles.

Distressed double denim continued the underwater vibe on one male model who plodded down the runway with a blue knitted mask over his entire face, and transparent globules over his hands. It made him look as if he had been attacked by a jellyfish. Or Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh's show may have been another dig at the coronavirus pandemic.

## YSL IS ABOUT SEXY HOODS

Dramatic 80s shoulders, column silhouettes — and hoods — harked from the heyday of the late Yves Saint Laurent at the Parisian stalwart's Tuesday evening show, all set to the twinkle of the Eiffel Tower.

The house founder fastidiously turned the "capuche" into one of his most iconic styles -- originally inspired by the tubular sheath donned by dancer Martha Graham for her 1930 choreography Lamentation. So Saint Laurent would likely have looked fondly upon the offering by designer Anthony Vaccarello, who took this hood style and ran -- or strutted -- with it.

A 90s refinement infused the glaringly 80s capuches that came in muted or caramel tones — hues also reminiscent of that garish era. This hood formed the base silhouette of many pared-down ensembles, which contrasted with statement gold earrings or large wooden bracelets, and oozed sex appeal. Heavy open wool coats and regal trenches, which caressed the floor, created a rectangular window frame through which to see the pants in some clever fashion theater. Elsewhere, short turtlenecks on figure hugging jerseys evoked an aesthetic that screamed sensual pleasure.

## VAQUERA BRINGS STARS AND STRIPES TO PARIS

A flash of American funk graced Paris for Monday's installment of fashion week — a day reserved for up-and-comers. Vaquera, who came to prominence five years ago in New York with a U.S. flag gown with massive train, moved this season across the pond and was a highlight.

Designers Patric DiCaprio and Bryn Taubensee mixed their edgy styles with looks that moved in a more commercial direction for spring-summer. Distressed denim, the punk exuberance and corsetry of Vivienne Westwood's heyday and lashings of Americana references — like a loose sheeny biker jacket — defined the often-saleable 31-look display.

The U.S. flag made its runway return, here as a sheer shawl that led down to a fabulous ballooning parachute skirt.

## LANCÔME'S LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

The first major party of the season celebrated one of Paris' most iconic perfume and cosmetic brands: Lancôme. A stone staircase dappled in colored light led VIP guests including model Noemie Lenoir into the palatial Petit Palais venue by the banks of the Seine River Monday night.

This season Lancôme, owned by L'Oreal, celebrated the 10th anniversary of its best-selling French perfume "La Vie Est Belle" — or "life is beautiful." Victoria's Secret model Sara Sampaio also made the party in the famous art museum in a black mini with frills.

**Over 194,000 Russians flee call-up to neighboring countries**

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By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — It took Vsevolod four days to drive from Moscow to Russia's southern border with Georgia. He had to abandon his car at one point and continue on foot.

On Tuesday, he finally finished his 1,800-kilometer (1,100-mile) journey and crossed the frontier to escape being called up to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine.

"At 26, I do not want to be carried home in a zinc-lined (coffin) or stain (my) hands with somebody's blood because of the war of one person that wants to build an empire," he told The Associated Press, asking that his last name not be used because he feared retaliation from Russia.

He was one of over 194,000 Russian nationals who have fled to neighboring Georgia, Kazakhstan and Finland — most often by car, bicycle or on foot — in the week since President Vladimir Putin announced a partial mobilization of reservists.

The mass exodus of men — alone or with their families or friends — began Sept. 21, shortly after Putin's address to the nation, and continued all this week. Early on, they snapped up airline tickets, which spiked in price on the few airlines still flying out of Russia. But the rest had to gas up their cars and join the long lines snaking on roads toward the borders.

According to the online service Yandex Maps, the traffic jam leading to Verkhny Lars, a border crossing into Georgia from Russia's North Ossetia region, stretched for about 15 kilometers (over 9 miles) on Tuesday. Social media showed hundreds of pedestrians lining up at the checkpoint after Russian border guards relaxed regulations and allowed people to cross on foot.

Similarly long queues were reported at some crossings into Kazakhstan.

The Interior Ministry of Georgia said over 53,000 Russians have entered the country since last week, while Interior Ministry officials in Kazakhstan said 98,000 crossed into that nation. The Finnish Border Guard agency said over 43,000 arrived in the same period. Media reports also said another 3,000 Russians entered Mongolia, which also shares a border with the country.

Russian authorities sought to stem the flow, barring some men from leaving and citing mobilization laws. The practice did not seem widespread, but rumors persisted that Moscow may soon shut the borders to all men of fighting age.

Police in North Ossetia said a makeshift enlistment office will be set up at the Verkhny Lars crossing, and local officials confirmed to the state news agency Tass that Russian men are being served call-up summonses at crossings into Georgia.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has said that only about 300,000 men with prior combat or other military service would be mustered, but reports have emerged from various Russian regions that recruiters were rounding up men outside that description. That fueled fears of a much broader call-up, sending droves of men of all ages and backgrounds to airports and borders.

"There's a risk that they will announce a full mobilization," according to a resident of St. Petersburg who made it to Kazakhstan on Tuesday. The man, who refused to give his name because he feared for his safety, told AP he spent three days driving from his home to Uralsk in northwestern Kazakhstan near the border.

He said Putin's mobilization remarks differed from what his decree said, leaving room for a broader interpretation, adding: "People worry that sooner or later, a full mobilization will be announced, and no one will be able to cross the borders."

Kazakhstan and Georgia, both part of the former Soviet Union and both offering visa-free entry by Russian nationals, seemed to be the most popular destinations for those traveling by land to flee the call-up. Finland and Norway require visas.

Georgia, whose support for Ukraine is visible by the yellow and blue flags adorning buildings as well as graffiti against Putin and Russia, has been somewhat apprehensive about the influx of Russians, especially after the country fought a brief war with Moscow in 2008.

Opposition politicians have demanded the government take drastic actions against the arriving Russians, from introducing visas to banning them completely. No such action has been taken yet.

Kazakhstan seems more welcoming. Since the beginning of the war, the Central Asian nation of 19 million has taken a course increasingly independent from its ally, Moscow, especially on the war in Ukraine.



In announcing the number of Russians crossing the border, Kazakhstan Interior Minister Marat Akhmetzhanov said authorities won't send home those avoiding the call-up unless they are on an international wanted list for criminal charges.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev even ordered his government to help the Russians entering his country "because of the current hopeless situation."

"We must take care of them and ensure their safety. It is a political and a humanitarian issue. I tasked the government to take the necessary measures," he said, adding that Kazakhstan will hold talks with Russia on the issue.

In Uralsk, volunteers helped those entering the city of 236,000. Some of them told AP that they were serving free hot meals and helping the arrivals to find accommodations, which were quickly filling up. Those who can't find apartments or hotel rooms could spend the night in gyms, one volunteer said.

Dilara Mukhambetova, director of the Cinema Park theater, even said arriving Russians could sleep in her facility after she drove around the city and saw a lot of people who looked lost.

"We freed up one auditorium, organized tea, and volunteers brought hot meals," Mukhambetova was quoted by local media as saying. "We filled four auditoriums, (accommodating) about 200 people in total."

## Funds to aid Jackson's water system held up as governor rose

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Years before people in Jackson were recently left without running water for several days, Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves claimed to have helped block money to fund water system repairs in the capital city.

Reeves, a Republican, blames Jackson's water crisis on mismanagement at the city level. The city's latest water troubles are far from its first, and they have stemmed from decaying infrastructure beyond one water treatment plant. The EPA said 300 boil water notices have been issued over the past two years in the city.

As Reeves climbed Mississippi's political ladder, he cited his opposition to financially helping the capital as evidence of his fiscal conservatism. Jackson-area lawmakers say the troubled water system is one example of Jackson's status as a political punching bag for Republican officials, who control the Legislature and the state Bond Commission.

"We operate under the golden rule here," said Democratic Sen. John Horhn of Jackson. "And the golden rule is: He who has the gold makes the rules."

In Jackson, 80% of residents are Black, and 25% live in poverty. Repeated breakdowns made it unsafe for people to drink from their tap, brush their teeth and wash their dishes without boiling the water first. At a September news conference, Reeves said water service was restored to most of the city only after the state "stepped in" to provide emergency repairs. He also said that he didn't anticipate a need for the Legislature to approve more debt for Jackson's water system.

The specter of another weather-induced water stoppage looms large for some Jackson residents. "Winter is coming," said Brooke Floyd, a local activist. "He's saying it's fixed. But it's not fixed."

Water service was also cut off in parts of the city due to a winter storm in 2010. By June 2011, Reeves was locked in a Republican primary campaign for lieutenant governor. As the tea party movement thrust government spending to the center of political debate, his opponent lambasted him for signing off on bond debt increases.

With election day just weeks away, Reeves — who was the state treasurer — appeared on a conservative talk radio show to push his track record as a tightfisted "watchdog" over state legislators eager to borrow. The host, Paul Gallo, wanted to know why Reeves had voted to approve most bond projects as a member of the state Bond Commission. His voting record didn't tell the whole story, Reeves said. For instance, take the millions in bonds the city had requested to repair its crumbling water and sewer infrastructure.

"I've never voted against that because it's never gotten to the Bond Commission. We are talking to the city of Jackson," Reeves said. "If we are not comfortable, we never bring it up for a vote."

The Bond Commission decided not to consider issuing bonds for Jackson water projects that had been authorized by the Legislature, Reeves said.

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"Let's just say there is an economic development in a town that doesn't have a lot of political power," Gallo responded. "The Bond Commission can just refuse to take it up? ... Isn't that the same thing as a negative vote?"

"It is the same thing as a negative vote," Reeves said.

Most years, the Legislature authorizes projects in one king-sized measure, known in legislators' parlance as "the big bond bill." Then, the Bond Commission — made up of the governor, attorney general and state treasurer — votes on whether to issue the bonds.

The commission issues most bonds that come up for a vote. In 2011, Reeves' primary opponent said Reeves voted during his two terms as state treasurer to approve too much debt. But some bonds aren't brought to a vote or are delayed, such as those proposed for Jackson water and sewer improvements.

In response to questions at a September news conference, Reeves said his recollection of what happened in 2010 is that the city never prepared the necessary paperwork to receive water bonds authorized by the Legislature. A document obtained by The Associated Press shows city leaders prepared a proposal in 2010 asking the state for \$13.5 million in bonds for water system upgrades downtown. The Legislature later approved a dwarfed bond proposal for \$6 million.

But after the Legislature's approval, Reeves and Republican Gov. Haley Barbour initially failed to include the city's water project in the state bonds to be issued in the fall of 2010.

The Legislature added an application requirement for the bond, which former Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration spokeswoman Kym Wiggins told the Jackson Free Press was "exclusive" to Jackson at the time. In order to have its application approved, Reeves said the city would need to answer a number of questions about how the money would be spent.

Barbour and Reeves later relented and voted to approve the bond after city officials made commitments that included funding projects through low-interest loans, rather than the interest-free loans outlined in the legislation.

The governor's office told the AP that as state treasurer, Reeves ultimately voted to approve the bonds. But in the June 2011 interview with Gallo, he said the Bond Commission had refused to put Jackson water bonds on its agenda.

"We make the decision prior to it being on the agenda such that there is not an actual vote," Reeves said.

Before the Bond Commission gets involved, bond bills proposed by Jackson-area lawmakers frequently fail to make it out of the Legislature.

In the 2022 legislative session, a bill that would have authorized \$4 million in bonds for Jackson water and sewer improvements died in committee. Another would have appropriated money to construct a separate water system for Jackson State University, which had to bring in temporary restrooms and portable showers in August as discolored water flowed through dorm faucets.

At another September news conference, Reeves said the state gave Jackson \$200 million over the last several years to address its water problems. But the numbers Reeves' office gave Jackson television station WLBT-TV include revenue generated from measures like a 1% sales tax paid only by people who shop in Jackson.

"That is not money that comes from the state of Mississippi," said Democratic state Rep. Earle Banks of Jackson. "That is money that comes from the citizens of Jackson and people who do business in the city of Jackson."

With population decline eroding Jackson's tax base, voters in 2014 overwhelmingly approved a 1% local sales tax for infrastructure repairs. The Jackson city council asked for legislative approval for another election to double that local tax to 2 cents on the dollar. A bill to increase the sales tax died in the 2021 legislative session.

Reeves said Jackson needed to fix its problems with its billing system before "asking everyone else to pony up more money."

Efforts to attract private investment by keeping taxes low have long been central to Reeves' economic thinking.

The government does not create jobs; it simply "creates an environment which encourages the private

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sector to invest capital," Reeves said in the 2011 interview with Gallo. "And the infrastructure around that is a function of government."

Reeves said government has a role to play in building infrastructure to hasten development. Those economic principles have not been applied to Jackson, some officials said.

"Look, we can we can bury our heads in the sand and say, 'Jackson's problem is not our problem,'" Horhn said. "But when you hear there ain't no water, and you can't brush your teeth or take a crap, you strike Mississippi from the list."

## UN General Assembly meeting of world leaders, by the numbers

By MALLIKA SEN Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The barricades are down, the world leaders have left and New Yorkers are complaining slightly less about traffic. The gathering of world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly is over. Here, we break down the stats for you:

U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSIONS: 77

The first U.N. General Assembly was convened in 1946. This month the 77th session opened.

DAYS OF GENERAL DEBATE: 6

The stately fireworks that mark the so-called General Debate — where presidents, prime ministers and kings take the stage — began on Tuesday, Sept. 20. Speeches continued through Monday, Sept. 26, with Sunday off.

SPEAKERS: 195

The 195 includes speeches from three permanent observers — Palestine, the Holy See and the European Union — as well as opening speeches from U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the president of the 77th General Assembly, Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary, who also delivered a closing speech.

FIRST SPEECH: Brazil

LAST SPEECH: Nauru

Brazil is historically the first member to speak, as their decision to volunteer amid others' reluctance in the early days of the General Assembly set a precedent. Nauru is by no means obligated to go last — in 2021, the final speaker was Timor-Leste — but the order of speakers is generally determined by factors including geography and what position the speaker holds.

TITLE OF SPEAKERS:

— Presidents: 73

— Kings: 2

— Princes: 2

— Emirs: 1

— Prime ministers: 49

— Transitional or acting leaders: 2

— Secretaries of state: 1

— Vice presidents: 4

— Ministers: 52

— Permanent representatives to the United Nations: 7

The most common types of speakers are heads of state, heads of government and ministers. This year saw four royals at the rostrum including the kings of Jordan and Eswatini and the emir of Qatar. There were two speakers with the title of prince: Prince Albert II is Monaco's head of state, while Prince Farhan bin Faisal is Saudi Arabia's foreign minister (though the tally above counts him only in the prince column).

Pietro Parolin, the delegate from the Holy See, has the title of "secretary of state." The position is held by a cardinal who acts as the pope's deputy and handles the Vatican's political and diplomatic affairs.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan is Sudan's transitional leader. He led a coup against a transitional government charged with shepherding the country to democracy last year. Mali's acting prime minister, Abdoulaye Maiga, is also a spokesperson for the government of the country's coup leader, Assimi Goita.

GENDER OF SPEAKERS:

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Male: 173

Female: 22

Women's voices at the U.N. General Assembly typically number few. Even among this year's speakers, fewer than half — nine, to be precise — were heads of state or government. The paltry total still represented an improvement from last year, when only 18 women spoke.

The president of last year's General Assembly, Abdullah Shahid of the Maldives, convened the first-ever UNGA Platform of Women Leaders to try to address the gap. During the meeting last week, participants said it could take anywhere between 130 and 300 years to achieve gender parity.

ABSENCES: 3

Afghanistan, Myanmar and São Tomé and Príncipe are all U.N. member-states, but none took the microphone this year. The status of Afghanistan and Myanmar's representation remains in dispute — the same issue precluded the two Asian countries from speaking last year, following the military junta's toppling of Myanmar's civilian government and the resurrection of the Taliban's control over Afghanistan. The reason for the small African island nation's absence was less clear; an email seeking comment from its U.N. mission was not returned and the phone numbers for the mission were not operational.

LANGUAGES USED TO DELIVER SPEECHES: 22

— English: 105

— French: 23

— Spanish: 20

— Arabic: 19

— Portuguese: 6

— Russian: 3

— Korean: 2

Belgium and Canada do not factor into the breakdown above, as their representatives each delivered significant portions of their speeches in both English and French.

Of the six official U.N. languages — Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish — Chinese was the lone in which only a single speech (China's) was delivered. The other languages with one-speech-only appearances: Bengali, Bosnian, Catalan, Farsi, German, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Kyrgyz, Macedonian, Malay, Mongolian, Polish and Turkish. Regardless of the language, the United Nations has its own argot, too.

VIDEO SPEECHES: 1

Because of the ongoing war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was granted special dispensation by a vote to address the General Assembly via a prerecorded video. His speech aired Wednesday, running a little under a half-hour, and was delivered in English.

RIGHT OF REPLY

Usages: 21

Country that made the most use of the exercise: Iran, at 4

The right of reply is the closest the General Debate gets to a, well, debate. Countries are allotted time after the day's speeches to respond to claims made by others. In addition to Iran, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Armenia and Azerbaijan all made multiple uses of this feature.

SHORTEST SPEECH: Guinea-Bissau's, given by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló, at 7 minutes, 30 seconds. Embaló's speedy speech, delivered in Portuguese, still managed to touch on a range of topics including climate change, regional security, infectious diseases and the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

LONGEST SPEECH: Palestine's, delivered by President Mahmoud Abbas, at 47 minutes, 23 seconds

Palestine is not a member of the United Nations, but regularly speaks at the U.N. General Assembly's high-level meeting because of its status as a permanent observer. Abbas even brought props. The runner-up was Congo, a U.N. member-state represented this year by President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, whose French speech clocked in about 10 minutes shorter than Abbas'.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF SPEECHES: Around 19 minutes

Delegates are "kindly requested" to keep speeches to 15 minutes, as the president of the General Assembly reminded the hall multiple times as the first day of the General Debate wore on. Slovakian President



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Zuzana Čaputová ended her speech (under 12 minutes!) with a bit of a mic drop: "And since obeying even the smallest of rules matters, let me finish here to respect the agreed time limit."

REFERENCES TO "AUGUST" BODY, ASSEMBLY, HALL OR HOUSE: At least 24

REFERENCES TO "SEPTEMBER" BODY, ASSEMBLY, HALL OR HOUSE: 0

Yes, we know what "august" means — but when listening to more than 10 hours of oration on the dire state of the world, one looks for moments of levity.

## Bolsonaro campaign to evangelicals: Brazil's soul at stake

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

SALVADOR, Brazil (AP) — Off a byway outside Salvador, past an evangelical church and down a short path, Thiago Viana was preparing a celebration. Two new members of his temple would soon emerge from months of seclusion, marking initiation into his Afro Brazilian faith, Candomble.

Then his phone started pinging with messages: Michelle Bolsonaro, the wife of President Jair Bolsonaro, had posted a video to Instagram of Viana and his sister showering former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva with popcorn — a Candomble cleansing rite associated with Obaluaê, the deity of earth and health. The first lady's short comment denounced such a display from da Silva — even as some criticize her for speaking about God.

It unleashed a flood of posts from pastors, lawmakers and ordinary people using the video to claim the Lord's will is for da Silva to lose. Some called Viana and his kind devil worshippers, though he says there's no such thing as the devil in Candomble.

"I was thick-skinned on the outside, but it destroyed me within. ... My flesh was trembling and began to throb," he said. "I expected this from an ordinary evangelical person, but not from a person like the first lady."

Viana was caught in the crossfire of a religiously tinged political attack on da Silva, who leads all polls against the incumbent. Bolsonaro is waging an all-out campaign to shore up the crucial evangelical vote that involves keyboard crusaders and the first lady ahead of Oct. 2 elections.

Influential politicians and evangelical pastors are warning their followers, on Facebook and in pulpits, that da Silva would close Christian churches — which he vehemently denies. Users are liking, sharing and commenting in what appears a concerted tactic to distance evangelicals from da Silva, according to Marie Santini, the coordinator of NetLab, a research group at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro that monitors social media and has specifically focused on evangelicals.

"This discourse that the election will be a religious war is theirs," Santini said. "They want to make this election a religious war." \_\_\_\_\_

This is the first installment in The Associated Press' two-part package about the intersection of politics and religion in Brazil.

Self-declared evangelicals make up almost a third of Brazil's population, more than double two decades ago, according to demographer José Eustáquio Diniz Alves, a former researcher for 17 years at the national school of statistical sciences. He projects they will approach 40% by 2032, surpassing Catholics.

They helped carry Bolsonaro to power in 2018, and he proceeded to tap members of their churches for important ministries and for a Supreme Court justice nomination. But in this electoral cycle, Bolsonaro initially found more difficulty winning their favor.

Many poor evangelicals fondly remembered leftist da Silva's 2003-2010 tenure as time when they could afford to buy meat and pay their bills, according to Esther Solano, a sociologist at the Federal University of Sao Paulo who conducts polling of Bolsonaro voters and evangelicals. Some moderate evangelicals felt Bolsonaro used them politically and isn't a real Christian, as evidenced by his hostility toward public health measures during the pandemic.

Since May, however, various polls have found a significant part of the evangelical vote migrated from da Silva to Bolsonaro, a shift attributed to the incumbent's campaign to portray Brazil as spiritually ill and

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argue only he can safeguard Christian faith.

Both candidates are Catholic, but Bolsonaro frames the race as a battle of good versus evil, with himself as God's standard-bearer and da Silva a devil. He holds up his wife as the paragon of a Christian woman; she says her husband banished demons who occupied the presidential palace.

Santini said an ecosystem of religious and political disinformation websites has been generating content that candidates, pastors and politicians redistribute via social. It set the news cycle for weeks, with TV pundits calling the race a holy war.

The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, one of Brazil's largest evangelical congregations, tweeted on Sept. 15 that evangelicals "woke up to fact it's impossible to be Christian and from the left."

The campaign also entails associating da Silva with Afro Brazilian religions. One video shared widely in evangelical circles early this year was edited so he appeared to say the devil was speaking to him and taking control. It influenced evangelicals' perceptions at the time, according to Solano, who interviewed dozens of them.

In a campaign appearance Sept. 7, Bolsonaro told the crowd they should compare da Silva's wife with his own — "a woman of God, family and active in my life." Days earlier, a photo circulating in pro-Bolsonaro social media showed da Silva's wife standing before figures of Afro Brazilian religious deities, known as orixas.

Brazil's presidential palace and campaign declined to comment on strategy.

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Using Afro Brazilian religions as a political attack isn't new. In 1912, in northeastern Alagoas state, a long-serving governor's supposed involvement with such groups served as pretext to pressure for his resignation, and a citywide ransacking of their temples. That triggered decades of so-called quiet worship, without traditional singing, clapping and drumming.

Today just a small minority practices the religions in Brazil, and in recent years there have been increased reports of incidents of religious intolerance targeting them, particularly at the hands of members of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches. Those institutions, founded since 1970, focus on spreading faith among nonbelievers. While most proselytizing is peaceful, members of African-influenced religions have been subjected to verbal abuse, discrimination, destruction of their temples and forced expulsion from neighborhoods.

"It became fashionable to start thinking that there is just one truth, that God serves for only one religion," said Laura Gallo, a Candomble and Umbanda priestess in Rio de Janeiro. "For the first time, I see our country very divided with regard to religions, and I think that really inflates intolerance."

There have been efforts to promote interfaith respect. In 2007 da Silva signed into law a national day for combating religious intolerance, in memory of a Candomble priestess who was denounced as a charlatan by a prominent evangelical church's newspaper. She was then attacked by an evangelical couple who entered her temple and hit her over the head with a Bible, and died of a heart attack not long after.

Government data show there have been more reports of religious intolerance this year.

There has been a particular surge in the digital realm: 2,918 reports of online incidents in the first eight months of 2022, up from 516 in the same months in 2021, according to the Salvador-based nonprofit SaferNet, which fields complaints via a hotline it runs with the prosecutor-general's office.

That partly stems from an increase in individual offenses, but much more from such content being widely shared and reaching a far greater audience and therefore garnering more reports, according to SaferNet's director, Juliana Cunha.

"Debate is polarized, the mood is tense. That leaves people predisposed," Cunha said. "There's a trigger. Something reinforces your perception, you pass it along."

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Michelle Bolsonaro avoided the spotlight during most of her husband's presidency, though there were glimpses of her faith. One video showed her repeating "glory to God," speaking in tongues and hopping joyfully after the Senate approved his evangelical Supreme Court appointee.

Over the past two months, however, she has stepped forward and become the leading evangelical voice

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from Bolsonaro's camp. She has said she prays at Bolsonaro's chair and that, before his presidency, the palace had been consecrated to demons.

At a March for Jesus last month in Rio, she was front and center pumping up a crowd that buzzed with energy. Belting out gospel songs, she made heart signs and blew kisses.

"We will bring the presence of the Lord Jesus to the government and declare that this nation belongs to the Lord," she said in her speech that day. "And the doors of hell will not prevail against our family, the Brazilian church or our Brazil."

That sort of fervent display of faith has resonated with lots of evangelical voters — even in the northeast region, a stronghold of da Silva's Workers' Party.

In Salvador, evangelical pastor Binha Santana and churchgoer Rosilda Carvalho both said they will likely vote for Jair Bolsonaro — or, rather, against da Silva. Santana said the latter's ideology isn't compatible with a government of God, while Carvalho cited his corruption convictions — a frequent Bolsonaro talking point — though they were annulled by the Supreme Court.

Neither was especially excited about the incumbent, but both perked up at the mention of the first lady.

"In Brasilia (the nation's capital) now there are prayers, and where there is prayer, the Lord is present," Santana said. "He is not evangelical, but her prayer covers him."

Political scientist Bruno Carazza said Michelle Bolsonaro's deployment in the home stretch has been like a "secret weapon."

"She communicates very well with that public because she is authentically evangelical, unlike Bolsonaro who says he is Catholic and embraces evangelicalism because of political opportunism," Carazza said. "She has a very important role in communication. She literally speaks the tongue of evangelicals."

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Bolsonaro's support among evangelicals has climbed to 50% from 39% in May, while da Silva's tumbled, according to a survey pollster Datafolha conducted Sept. 20-22.

The former president's camp has recognized he has lost ground with them, and earlier this month da Silva held a much-heralded meeting with evangelicals in a stuffy gymnasium on Rio's outskirts.

Da Silva told the crowd his rise from poverty to the presidency is testament to God's existence, but stopped short of expanding upon his spirituality. He has said he wishes to treat all religions with respect, including Afro Brazilian faiths, and eschewing religious rivalries or anything resembling holy war.

"I learned that the state shouldn't have religion, the state shouldn't have church. It should guarantee the operation and freedom of however many churches people want to create," he said.

Conservative evangelicals took to social media to portray his remarks as an attack on the Christian church.

A story on one pro-Bolsonaro news website, Folha da Politica, that referenced the same comments and circulated widely on WhatsApp, accused Lula of making threats and being "full of hatred." Video of the remarks were also shared online by Carlos Bolsonaro, the president's son.

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One of Bolsonaro's most fervent backers is Silas Malafaia, a popular pastor who presided over the president's wedding to the first lady, his third wife. He boasts millions of social media followers and regularly blasts da Silva, known universally as Lula, and his party, which he calls "The Party of Darkness."

In an interview, Malafaia said he backs Bolsonaro despite his "defects" because they have shared agendas. He accused da Silva of representing a Marxist cultural campaign to abolish the Judeo-Christian model in the Western world, and vowed to continue preaching that to his flock.

At one service this month, he spent 15 minutes discussing the election. He expressed astonishment that believers might "rip up the Bible in their heart" by voting for a candidate who, he argued, hates their principles, is indifferent to defending traditional families and supports leftist leaders who persecute churches.

"I'm not going to go easy on them. ... because I know who they are and what they do," Malafaia said in an interview afterward. "It is a brand of lying, of cynicism to deceive the people. It's 'Lula, peace and love' on the outside and the devil on the inside."

"We are not fools. That time is over," Malafaia continued. "Social networks ended the monopoly of in-

formation.”

The vitriol he received after the first lady shared the popcorn video on Instagram shook Viana, the Candomble priest on Salvador’s outskirts.

Already suffering from hypertension and high cholesterol, he hurried to a health clinic where a doctor prohibited him from using his phone or even thinking about the episode for two weeks. The medical report indicated Viana, 29, was suffering from high cardiovascular risk.

Largely due to that health scare, Viana said, the orixa Obaluaê asked him to postpone a banquet in his honor, to Sept. 17.

The temple’s brick walls were covered with dried palm fronds and drums sent feet shuffling along the earthen floor for hours. People entered trancelike states as they received the orixas.

Following a Yoruba blessing, Afro Brazilian dishes that filled clay pots were served into makeshift bowls fashioned from leaves and shared around.

The drumming resumed. And popcorn rained from overhead, to cleanse everyone of sickness.

## Study tries to see if child vaccines and asthma are linked

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A number of scientists have wondered if aluminum, a vaccine additive that has been used for decades, had a role in allergies and asthma in children.

A new federally funded study has found a possible link, but experts say the research has important shortcomings and is not a reason to change current vaccine recommendations. The study doesn’t claim aluminum causes the breathing condition, and officials say more work is needed to try to confirm any connection, which hadn’t been seen in earlier research.

Even if a link were ever found, the life-saving benefits of the vaccines are still likely to outweigh the asthma risk, said Dr. Matthew Daley, the study’s lead author. But it’s possible that if the results are confirmed, it could prompt new work to redesign vaccines, he added.

Dr. Paul Offit, of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, worried that the flawed study will needlessly scare some families away from proven vaccines.

“Making an extraordinary claim requires extraordinary evidence,” Offit said. This study does not offer that kind of evidence, he said.

He and other outside experts noted that Daley and his colleagues were unable to account for the effects of some potentially important ways children are exposed to aluminum — such as in the air or through their diet.

They also noted the findings include hard-to-explain inconsistencies, like why, in one subset of thousands of fully vaccinated kids, more aluminum exposure didn’t seem to result in a higher asthma risk.

CDC officials, in a statement, said it appears that aluminum-containing vaccines “do not account for the overall trends that we see.”

The study, released Tuesday, suggests that young children who were vaccinated with most or all of the recommended aluminum-containing vaccines had at least a 36% higher risk of being diagnosed with persistent asthma than kids who got fewer vaccines.

Aluminum has been used in some vaccines since the 1930s, as an ingredient — called an adjuvant — that provokes stronger immune protection.

By age 2, children should be vaccinated against 15 diseases, according to U.S. recommendations. Aluminum adjuvants are in vaccines for seven of them.

Aluminum adjuvants have long been considered safe and effective. Still, scientists noted a period of increased rates in allergies and asthma among U.S. children during a 30-year period starting in about 1980, and some wondered if there was a connection. (Those rates leveled off starting about a decade ago and have declined somewhat in recent years, for reasons not fully understood.)

Several previous studies didn’t find a link between aluminum-containing childhood vaccines and aller-



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gies and asthma. But other research has linked aluminum in industrial workplaces to asthma. And mice injected with aluminum suffer an immune system reaction that causes the kind of airway inflammation seen in childhood asthma.

"Based on what I consider limited animal data, there is a theoretical risk that the aluminum in vaccines could influence allergy risk," said Daley, an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

In 2013, the Institute of Medicine — now known as the National Academy of Medicine — called for more federal research into the safety of childhood vaccines, including their use of aluminum.

The new study is part of the government response to that call, Daley said. It was funded by the CDC, and included current and former CDC staffers among its authors. It was published by the medical journal *Academic Pediatrics*.

The researchers focused on about 327,000 U.S. children born from 2008 to 2014, looking at whether they got vaccines containing aluminum before age 2 and whether they developed persistent asthma between ages 2 and 5.

Asthma, a condition that can cause spasms in the lungs, usually results from an allergic reaction. About 4% of U.S. children under 5 have persistent asthma.

The researchers took steps to try to account for different factors that might influence the results, including race and ethnicity, whether kids were born premature or whether children had food allergies or certain other conditions.

But there were many other factors they were unable to address. For example, aluminum can routinely be found in breastmilk, infant formula and food, but the researchers were unable to get data on how much aluminum the kids got from eating. They also had no information on aluminum exposures from the air and environment where the children lived.

The researchers split the study group into two. One was about 14,000 kids who developed eczema, a skin condition that is seen as an early indicator for the development of asthma or other allergic diseases. They wanted to see if kids with eczema were more or less sensitive to aluminum in vaccines, compared with children who did not have early eczema. The other 312,000 or so kids in the study did not have early eczema.

Both groups got roughly the same amount of vaccine-related aluminum. The researchers found that for each milligram of aluminum received through vaccines, the risk of persistent asthma rose 26% in the eczema kids and 19% in kids who did not have eczema.

Overall, kids who got 3 milligrams or more of vaccine-related aluminum had at least a 36% higher risk of developing persistent asthma than kids who got less than 3, Daley said.

Offit said the study's limitations meant that the work has "added nothing to our understanding of vaccines and asthma."

But other experts said the researchers drew from a respected set of patient data and worked carefully with the best information that was available.

"This is public health at its best. They are making every effort to find any possible signal that may be a concern," said Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. "It's our job to exhaustively examine that to see if that's true."

He acknowledged anti-vaccine activists will likely jump to conclusions that the evidence doesn't support. But if CDC had the information and didn't publish it, the agency might be seen as misleading the public, further eroding trust, he said.

Dr. Sarah Long, professor of pediatrics at the Drexel University College of Medicine, echoed that.

"I believe in complete transparency," she said. "If you've asked a question and here spent our (taxpayer) money to (investigate) that question, I think the results should be aired in all of its warts and glory."

## **FAFSA season starts: What you need to know for financial aid**

By ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

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NEW YORK (AP) — The Free Application for Federal Student Aid filing season starts Oct. 1 for the 2023-2024 school year. If you plan to attend college next year, experts say you might want to fill out the FAFSA application as close to the opening date as possible.

Many institutions award financial aid on a first-come, first-serve basis. Karen McCarthy, vice president of public policy and federal relations from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, recommends students get started.

"It is a good idea to do it on the earlier side," said McCarthy. "Whenever (colleges) run out of money, then that's all the funding they have for the year."

Whether this is your first or fifth time filling out the application, here are some recommendations and background for completing this process and getting financial aid for your college career.

## —HOW DOES FAFSA WORK?

The FAFSA is a free government application that uses financial information from you and your family to determine whether you can get financial aid from the federal government to pay for college.

The FAFSA will send your financial information to the schools listed in the application that you are interested in attending — up to 10 schools. Each school that admits you will send you a financial aid package. The amount of financial aid you get depends on each institution.

This application is also used to determine eligibility for other federal student aid programs, like work-study and loans, as well as state and school aid. Sometimes, private, merit-based scholarships also require FAFSA information to determine if you qualify for their specific aid.

"Completing the FAFSA is probably the single most important thing you can do to get in line for scholarships, grants and other federal financial aid for college," said Rick Castellanos, vice president of corporate communications at Sallie Mae.

Nitro College, a website that offers advice for college students, has a step-by-step guide listing all the questions in the FAFSA.

## —WHO SHOULD FILL OUT THE FAFSA?

Anyone planning to attend college next year. Many decide not to apply thinking their family's income is too high to be considered, but McCarthy recommends all students fill out the application.

"There's no commitment, there's no charge," said McCarthy. "See what happens, you may be surprised. And if not, you have it on file in case you change your mind."

Students and parents can use the federal student aid estimator to get an early approximation of their financial package.

## —HOW DO I FILL OUT FAFSA?

The first step is to create an FSA ID to help you log into your account electronically. If you are a dependent student, your parents will also need to create an account.

Before starting your application, McCarthy recommends using your permanent personal email, one that is "available to you and that you check regularly."

Here are the documents you will need to fill out your FAFSA application:

—Your Social Security Number

—Your driver's license number, if you have one

—Your Alien Registration Number, if you are not a U.S. citizen

—Your federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned.

—Your bank statements and records of investments.

—Your records of untaxed income.

The application offers the option to get your federal tax return information from the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.

McCarthy also recommends students use their physical Social Security card when they fill out the application, not only to make sure they use the right number. but to double check their name.

"It's much easier to avoid an issue in the first place," said McCarthy. Some students who use their middle name in their daily lives make the mistake to list it as their first name on the application, she said. This

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causes issues with the application that will need to be resolved.

—WHEN SHOULD I FILL OUT FAFSA FOR FALL 2023-2024?

Meeting deadlines is important to avoid missing out on any possible financial aid you might receive. Aside from the federal deadline, students need to know if their state also has a deadline to be considered for financial aid.

The FAFSA application for the 2023-2024 year opens on Oct. 1 and must be submitted by June 30, 2024.

Each state has different deadlines for financial aid. For example, California has a March 2, 2023 deadline and Florida has a May 15, 2023 deadline for state financial aid programs.

You can check your state's deadline here.

—DO I HAVE TO RENEW MY FAFSA?

The FAFSA needs to be filled out every year you plan to attend college. However, it usually becomes easier to navigate the process after you've done it once.

"I feel a lot faster every year," said Haley Campbell Garcia, 28, who filled out the FAFSA for the first time in 2013 and has filled it out every year since, for her undergraduate and graduate degrees.

When you renew your application, some information is already pre-filled, but tax information and other items need to be updated.

—WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED FROM MY PARENTS FOR FAFSA?

If you are filing as a dependent student, you'll need to provide the financial information of at least one parent. If you list both parents, you need to know how they filed their tax return — jointly or separately — and their official marital status, said McCarthy.

"It seems like it should be obvious, but sometimes people don't necessarily know whether their parents are separated or actually divorced," said McCarthy. You can find the official marital status of your parents by checking their tax return.

Parents need to create their own FSA IDs. When your parents fill out the application, they can manually input their tax return information or use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.

Parents will need this information to fill out the FAFSA:

—Social Security number or Alien Registration number (if they are not U.S. citizens).

—Federal income tax returns, W-2s and other records of money earned.

If a student is applying for the 2023-2024 school year, parents need to use their 2021 federal tax return information.

If you have questions about income information, you can call the federal student aid office at 1-800-433-3243.

—WHAT IF MY PARENTS ARE NON CITIZENS WHEN I FILL OUT FAFSA?

Your parents' citizenship status does not affect your eligibility for student aid. The application doesn't ask for your parents' legal status in the country.

If your parent does not have a Social Security number, students should enter all zeros on the application. Also, parents without a Social Security number won't need to create a FSA ID, but will need to sign the application by printing and mailing it to the financial aid office so the student's application gets processed.

For more details on non-citizen parents you can visit [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov).

—HOW CAN I SPEAK WITH MY PARENTS ABOUT FAFSA WHEN THEY'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE?

Whether you are a first generation college student or your parents are immigrants, having to explain FAFSA to them can be challenging.

The way Jessica Sansarran, a 25-year-old resident of Orlando, approached this issue was by reading FAFSA guides to her parents and communicating her frustrations with the process.

"I told them 'you know, this is complicated for me too,'" said Sansarran, whose parents are from Guyana.

Anastasia Acerno, 21, approached this process similarly.

"I would just ask my parents for all their tax documentation, wait for them to find it, and then just ask them the questions myself, instead of having them go through the application," said Acerno, who graduated from the University of Albany.

—WHAT IF MY FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2021?

If your (or your family's) financial situation has drastically changed, you need to contact the specific institution that you are planning to attend. Each college handles special circumstances differently, said McCarthy.

—WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY FAFSA FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE?

FAFSA applications take three to five days to process, according to the student aid website. However, when you receive your financial aid package will depend on your institution. Usually, students get their financial aid package shortly after their admission offers.

—WHAT IF I MADE A MISTAKE IN MY FAFSA?

If you made a mistake filling out your application, you need to correct your FAFSA form. You can do this by logging in with your FSA ID, go to the "My FAFSA" page and select "make corrections."

In some instances, if the changes cannot be done through the FAFSA portal, students will need to reach out to their institution's financial aid office to make corrections.

—WHAT IF MY FINANCIAL AID IS NOT ENOUGH TO PAY FOR MY COLLEGE?

If the financial aid package from the college you plan to attend will not cover your college expenses, there are alternatives.

You can look into scholarships that might help lower the cost of attending college or student loans. There are two types of student loans: federal and private. Federal student loans usually offer lower interest rates than private loans.

—WHERE CAN I FIND MORE HELP TO FILL OUT FAFSA?

A lot of information about FAFSA can be found on the studentaid.gov website, but if you have more specific questions, you can speak with the financial aid office of your desired institution.

From filling out basic questions to a more in-depth understanding of your financial aid package, your college or community college's financial aid office can help.

In Yvette Solano's case, she requested help from someone in the financial aid office that spoke Spanish. "For me, it was about feeling comfortable asking questions and understanding the information," said Solano, 25, who attended San Diego City College and graduated from Cal State, Los Angeles this summer. "You shouldn't be ashamed of asking for help."

McCarthy also recommends looking for college access organizations that provide free help completing the FAFSA.

Students or parents can also call, email or live chat with the Federal Student Aid Information Center.

## **Regrow vegetables from kitchen scraps on a sunny windowsill**

By JESSICA DAMIANO Associated Press

Gardening naturally lends itself to reusing and recycling -- just think about compost and last year's seed trays. So if there's a way to reduce trash while saving money on produce, you can count me in. And one of my favorite ways to do both is to regrow vegetables from kitchen scraps.

Instead of throwing away or composting the bottoms (or tops) of vegetables when preparing them, you can grow them into leafy greens and other tasty tidbits right on your windowsill.

Before I go any further, it's important to point out that these methods aren't likely to produce plants that will grow well in your garden, so I don't recommend replacing your seedlings in this manner. But they are likely to yield a side dish or two, and you can never underestimate the value of a fun project.

General tips: Scraps will grow best in a sunny spot. Use lukewarm water, and replace it every day or two to avoid the growth of bacteria. Don't worry if the submerged portion of your cuttings becomes a bit slimy, but if the whole thing starts to turn brown, toss it in the compost pile and start over.

**BEETS**

My favorite thing about beets is that one plant provides two sides dishes -- the tuberous root and the tasty greens. Although you can't regrow a beetroot indoors from a cutting, you can certainly generate more leafy greens: Cut off the top 1 1/2 inches from a beetroot and place it cut-side down in a dish that



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contains just enough water to keep the sliced end submerged. New leaves will sprout from the top within a few days, and you can start harvesting them in a couple of weeks. (This method also works with parsnips and turnips).

## CELERY

Cut 3 inches off the bottom of a head of celery, then slice a sliver off the very bottom of the 3-inch segment. Place it right-side up in a shallow container and pour in 2 inches of water. New growth will sprout from the center in just a few days.

## SCALLIONS AND LEEKS

Trim the entire white portion off the bottom of a leek or scallion stalk, then place it root-side-down in a jar or glass holding an inch of water. If the stalk outgrows the jar, move it to a larger one. New growth will be harvestable in a couple of weeks.

## ROMAINE LETTUCE

Cut 3 inches off the bottom of a head of romaine lettuce, then remove its outermost leaves. Place the 3-inch "heart" in a shallow container to which you've added one-half inch of water. Within a week, a sprout will emerge from its center. As it grows, it's normal for some of the heart's outer leaves to turn brown. Remove them. When the center growth is large enough for a salad (or sandwich), trim it off and enjoy – then wait for more to grow.

## Recreating Marilyn Monroe's iconic outfits in 'Blonde'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Marilyn Monroe's on-screen costumes are almost as iconic as her. Think of the hot pink strapless gown she wore to sing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend." Or the white halter cocktail dress that billowed up over a subway grate in "The Seven Year Itch."

They have been recreated, reimagined and referenced many, many times, from big budget movies and music videos down to cheap costume stores and everything in between. The white subway dress she wore for the scene fetched \$4.6 million at auction in 2011 and several years later the "touring" replica went for \$120,000. Suffice it to say, "Blonde" costume designer Jennifer Johnson felt an enormous amount of pressure to get the dresses that we all know so well right for the Netflix film, streaming Wednesday.

While "Blonde" may be a fictionalized version of Monroe's story, the costumes are ripped from reality. The vast majority of the frocks star Ana de Armas wears in the film as Monroe are recreations that Johnson and her team had to make without the actual reference garment on hand. In fact, the only Monroe item she was able to study in real life, a jacket from the film "Niagara" that is kept at Western Costume in Los Angeles, did not make the cut.

Instead, Johnson relied on the films themselves, photos in director Andrew Dominik's 750-page "bible" for the shoot, and a little booklet by William Travilla, the longtime studio costume designer who was responsible for many of Monroe's most famous film looks.

"We couldn't obviously access the same fabrics, but it was really important to uphold the quality of construction to those original dresses so they didn't feel like a cheap simulation or like a costume," Johnson said.

She learned in Travilla's book that when the pink "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" dress wasn't moving correctly as Monroe descended down the stairs singing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," he, in a last-minute panic, procured some green felt meant for a pool table from another department and lined the garment with it. While she didn't resort to the pool table technique, she did empathize with Travilla's woes when she ran into similar problems herself.

Headaches aside, she said, when the money is there, it's "always easier to make it" than to find something vintage.

"It's quite hard to find existing things," she said. "Vintage clothing is going away. It's literally evaporating from this planet."

By far the most difficult dress to recreate, however, was the white pleated one immortalized in "The Seven Year Itch," another Travilla creation. The pleating proved to be enormously complex, in part because

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there aren't many places in the United States that specialize in that technique anymore, which requires custom molds.

"We had a lot of failures," Johnson said. "It was incredible how much fabric it took to create the arc and the drama of that dress when it blows up with the subway grate... I think we went through about 50 yards of fabric because the pleating wasn't right. It looked great, but the molds were not designed correctly for the pleating. There was a lot of research and development and waste going into that."

But it was worth it in the end to see it in the film, where it's almost a supporting character in a pivotal and chilling recreation of the memorable moment.

"It's so beautifully shot by Chayse Irvin, our amazing cinematographer, and Andrew is such a visionary," Johnson said. "That is just real dress porn in the movie. There's amazing slo-mo and you really can luxuriate in the quality of the dress."

Monroe's off-screen style was much more subdued and far from the sequins and glitziness of her movie looks. Johnson and Dominik decided she should have an off-duty uniform of sorts, consisting largely of Capri pants and turtleneck sweaters, some of which were vintage finds from Los Angeles costume houses.

"It was really important to me that that uniform project her desire to be taken seriously as an actor and as an artist," Johnson said. "She was kind of emulating beatnik style or French style."

Not everything is completely accurate, though. Naturalism was paramount for Johnson, including making sure that the outfits worked for both de Armas's body and a contemporary viewing audience. One thing they nixed were the marbles Monroe famously sewed into her bra. That, she determined, would be distracting to modern eyes.

"I never wanted it to feel funny or costume-y," Johnson said. "When I approach my designs, and even if that's a recreation from something we all know, it was really important that Ana never feel like she was wearing a costume."

"Those dresses are so iconic, they could easily overtake the actor and become all about the costume. And I always wanted it to be complementary to Ana's incredible performance."

## Rules sought for 'gooning,' taking troubled kids to care

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Within what's known as the secure transport industry, it's called "gooning." Brawny men show up under the cover of darkness and force a teenager into a vehicle, taking them against their will to a boarding school, foster home or treatment center.

The process is typically initiated by parents at wit's end over what to do with a child they perceive as troubled. For the kids, it's the traumatic first leg of a journey to an unheard-of place, perhaps hundreds of miles away from home.

Teens who resist are often told, "We can do this the easy way or the hard way." They might be restrained with handcuffs or zip ties. They could be blindfolded or hooded. Though a secure transport company operator was indicted last month, criminal charges are rare because the little-known industry is virtually unregulated. In fact, the indictment was for violating a restraining order, not for the transport itself.

"Some of these stories are almost out of a Charles Dickens novel," said Rep. Ro Khanna, a California Democrat who is pushing for federal regulation of the secure transport industry.

Thousands of American teenagers end up annually in some form of congregate care facility or program aimed at dealing with issues ranging from behavioral problems to drug or alcohol abuse and crime.

In Missouri alone, more than 100 Christian boarding schools promise hope for wayward teens. In Utah, wilderness programs use a back-to-nature approach to try and help young people turn around their lives. Other kids end up in foster homes or treatment centers.

In many cases, the children don't want to leave home and won't go along with their parents. That's where secure transport companies come in.

At a cost often reaching thousands of dollars, parents hire one of the many companies specializing in transporting children to congregate care. Many have websites touting their approaches.

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"My goal to your child is to start this transition with 100% honesty and integrity," Julio Sandoval of Safe, Sound, Secure Youth Ministries in Missouri posts on his site. "I am not of the ideology of necessarily making your child happy. Happiness will eventually arise when he finds himself growing as a young man and not a threat to himself and society."

Sandoval, 41, and the mother of a California teenager were indicted by a federal grand jury in August. The indictment said workers for Sandoval's company handcuffed the teenager at a store in Fresno, California, and drove him to the Agape Boarding School in Stockton, Missouri. The boy allegedly remained restrained for the entire 27-hour ride. Sandoval and the mother are accused of violating the boy's restraining order against her.

Sandoval was formerly a dean at Agape and now works at another Christian boarding school in Missouri, in addition to operating the transport company. Phone and email messages left with his company and Sandoval's lawyer weren't returned.

The secure transport industry is regulated in just one state — Oregon. That law, implemented in 2021, prohibits the use of hoods, blindfolds and handcuffs, among other things.

Other states may follow suit. Utah state Sen. Mike McKell, a Republican, and Missouri state Rep. Keri Ingle, a Democrat, plan to introduce legislation next session regulating the secure transport industry their states. But advocates say that because so many children are picked up in one state and taken to another, federal legislation is vital.

Currently, there are no federal laws regulating the transportation companies.

"You have a host of jurisdictional issues," McKell said. "You pick up a kid in California and he ends up in Missouri. If there is a problem or abuse, where does jurisdiction lie? This is an issue that squarely deals with interstate commerce. I do think we need a federal solution."

Khanna is formulating the "Accountability for Congregate Care Act," which would provide protections at youth facilities such as prohibiting solitary confinement and the use of chemical or physical restraints. His proposal also would provide for regulation of transport companies.

"I think people didn't realize the kind of trauma and abuse that was going on," Khanna said. "There was a sense they're going to be sent to be reformed, they're going to get tough love."

"But they didn't realize there was actually emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse taking place and they didn't realize the trauma of kids being tricked to going there. What we end up doing is just creating more trauma for these kids."

David Patterson was one of those kids.

He was a high-achieving high school freshman — honor roll student, a pole vaulter on the track team. He said his parents became alarmed because he got drunk and smoked marijuana on Halloween, and because he told them he was gay.

On Father's Day 2002, two men showed up at the Pattersons' California home around 4 a.m. and roused him out of bed. They displayed the handcuffs they'd use if he didn't get into a taxi, which took the trio to the airport for the flight to Missouri. Within hours, Patterson was at Agape, where he spent about a year.

Patterson, now 35, said the trauma of being taken to the school stuck with him for a decade. "When I would see yellow cabs I would have panic attacks and episodes," he said.

The process is expensive. One company lists fees on its website showing that prices range up to \$2,895 plus airfare for two agents and the child; or \$300 to \$5,000 for kids who are driven to a facility, depending on the distance and other factors.

A data analysis earlier this year by American Public Media, The Salt Lake Tribune and KUER public radio in Salt Lake City found that Utah receives far more troubled teens than any other state. The analysis of the period from 2015 through 2020 showed about one-third of teens who crossed state lines for a youth treatment facility ended up in Utah. Virginia, Texas, Missouri and Iowa had the next-highest numbers.

Adding to concerns about the secure transport companies are accusations about some of the places the kids are taken.

At Agape, serving about 60 teenage boys, the school's former doctor was charged last year with multiple counts of sexual abuse of children, and five staff members are charged with abuse. The Missouri Attorney

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General's office asked a judge this month to shut down Agape, and Missouri Speaker of the House Rob Vescovo asked the U.S. Attorney in Kansas City to do the same. So far, the school remains open.

In nearby Humansville, Missouri, Circle of Hope, a Christian boarding school for girls, closed amid an investigation in 2020. The husband-and-wife co-founders were charged with 99 abuse counts last year, including sexual abuse.

The allegations of wrongdoing at Agape and Circle of Hope led Ingle to sponsor a measure signed into law last year that requires more rigorous oversight in Missouri.

Now, Ingle said she'll seek stricter regulations on companies transporting the kids against their will.

"It seems like something that's so dramatic — minors being taken in the middle of the night and whisked away to a facility. But this is something that has been happening in this state for decades now," Ingle said.

## Pop singer Shakira to face trial over tax fraud in Spain

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — A Spanish judge on Tuesday approved a trial for Colombian pop singer Shakira on charges of tax fraud.

Spanish prosecutors accused the entertainer in 2018 of failing to pay 14.5 million euros (\$13.9 million) in taxes on income earned between 2012 and 2014. Prosecutors are seeking an eight-year prison sentence and a hefty fine if she is found guilty of tax evasion.

Shakira, 45, has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and rejected a deal with authorities to avoid going to trial. Her public relations firm has said that she has already paid all that she owed and an additional 3 million euros (\$2.8 million) in interest.

The court based in the town of Esplugues de Llobregat near Barcelona said that Shakira will face six counts of tax fraud. The date for the trial has yet to be set.

The case hinges on where Shakira lived during 2012-14. Prosecutors in Barcelona have alleged the Grammy winner spent more than half of that period in Spain and should have paid taxes in the country, even though her official residence was in the Bahamas.

Shakira, whose full name is Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll, has been linked to Spain since she started dating soccer player Gerard Pique. The couple, who have two children, used to live together in Barcelona but recently ended their 11-year relationship.

Spain has cracked down on soccer stars like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo over the past decade for not paying their full due in taxes. They were found guilty of evasion but both avoided prison time thanks to a provision that allows a judge to waive sentences under two years in length for first-time offenders.