

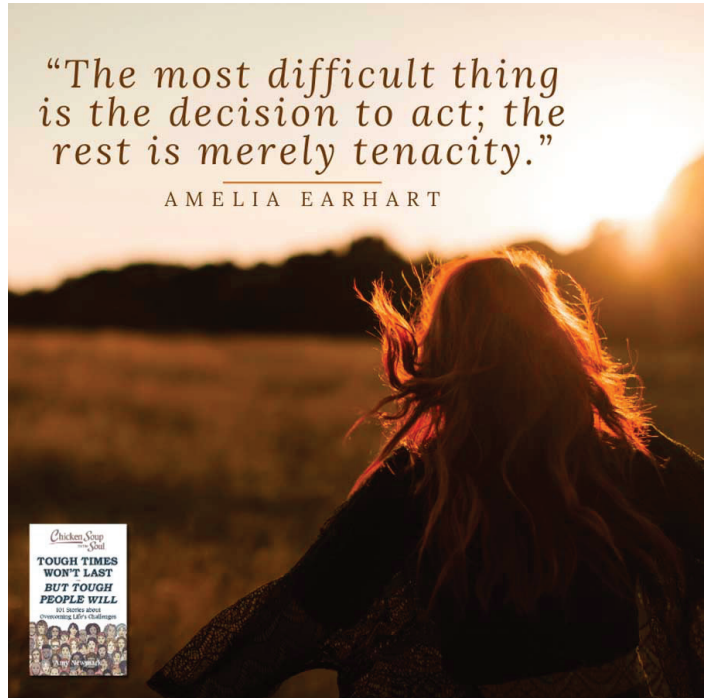
Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 1 of 51

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [4- GDI Living Heart Fitness Center ad](#)
- [4- Groton Area Kindergarten Roundup](#)
- [5- PrairieDoc: "Joint replacement surgery: an individualized decision"](#)
- [6- Help Wanted Ads](#)
- [7- EarthTalk - Defacing Mona Lisa](#)
- [8- SD Search Light: Minnehaha tackles backlog of warrants, court cases with warrant resolution court pilot program](#)
- [10- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Daily Devotional](#)
- [15- Subscription Form](#)
- [16- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [17- News from the Associated Press](#)

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act; the rest is merely tenacity."

AMELIA EARHART



Monday, April 1

NO SCHOOL - Easter Break
Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, broccoli, ice cream sundae, fruit.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 2

Senior Menu: Baked pork chops, au gratin potatoes, vegetable capri blend, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Cereal.
School Lunch: Chicken strips, fries.
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Wage Memorial Library Board meeting, 2 p.m. at the Library
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid / LWML, 1 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study meeting, 11 a.m., Groton Dairy Queen

Wednesday, April 3

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, apricots, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: French toast.
School Lunch: Chef salad.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
Groton Chamber Meeting, Noon at City Hall
Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m. ; Confirmation 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
United Methodist: Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, April 4

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger quinoa casserole, cheesy breadstick steamed Brussel sprouts, fruit.
School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.
Track at Mobridge 11 a.m.

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

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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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 2 of 51

1440

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

The second in a series of aid ships departed from Cyprus over the weekend, carrying almost 400 tons of food and supplies en route to the Gaza Strip. The shipments have been coordinated by World Central Kitchen, a nonprofit led by celebrity chef José Andrés.

The men's NCAA basketball tournament narrowed its field down to the Final Four yesterday, with No. 1 Purdue set to take on No. 11 NC State Saturday (6 pm ET, TBS), followed by No. 1 Connecticut facing No. 4 Alabama (8:50 pm ET, TBS).

Google's email provider, Gmail, turns 20 years old today, with an estimated 1.2 billion people worldwide using the free service, which has since become part of a suite of other products.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Chance Perdomo, actor known for starring roles in "Gen V" and "Chilling Adventures of Sabrina," dies following a motorcycle crash at age 27. Tim McGovern, Oscar-winning visual effects innovator, dies at age 68.

Beyoncé's "Cowboy Carter" album becomes most-streamed album in a single day in 2024 on Spotify, most first-day streams for country album by a female artist on Amazon Music.

"Godzilla x Kong: New Empire" hauls in \$194M at the global box office in its opening weekend. Singer Lizzo suggests via social media she's departing the music industry amid sexual harassment lawsuit.

Science & Technology

NASA's Curiosity rover begins exploring Mars' Gediz Vallis channel, a surface feature of the planet believed to have been an ancient river.

Researchers demonstrate optical fiber with data transfer rates above 300 terabits, or roughly 1 million times faster than average household broadband.

Engineers develop four-legged robot with basic climbing and hopping skills; advance may find applications for search and rescue applications in dangerous and unstable terrain.

Business & Markets

Fast-fashion firm Shein reports \$2B in profit in 2023, more than double year-over-year; numbers come ahead of planned initial public offering later this year. \$20 per hour minimum wage for California fast food workers begins today.

AT&T confirms data leak of an estimated 7.6 million active accounts, more than 65 million former accounts to the dark web; company initiates mass passcode reset.

California public employee pension fund to back activist investors Nelson Peltz and Jay Rasulo in upcoming Disney board vote; CalPERS, the largest public pension fund in the US, owns 6.6 million Disney shares.

Politics & World Affairs

Crews begin removing first steel section of Baltimore's collapsed Key Bridge following last week's collision by a cargo ship; what caused ship to lose power before crash still under investigation.

King Charles makes first major public appearance since cancer diagnosis, attending Easter services in Windsor. Pope Francis skips Good Friday processional, presides over Easter mass; appearance comes amid increasing concerns over the 87-year-old pontiff's health.

India's minority parties unite to protest arrest of prominent opposition leader, accuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi of silencing critics ahead of April 19 kickoff of national elections.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 3 of 51

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."
- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

The National Football League isn't a war, but it's still important to know the enemy, which in this case is the rest of the NFC North. In 2023 the Vikings finished third in the division with a 7-10 record, behind the Detroit Lions (12-5) and Green Bay Packers (9-8), and tied with the Chicago Bears (7-10). Unfortunately for the Vikings, all three of their division rivals are in good shape heading into the 2024 season.

Let's take a look at each team now that the dust of free agency has settled.

Detroit Lions

The Lions, behind head coach Dan Campbell, had one of the greatest seasons in franchise history. Their 12 wins tie a franchise record (1991) and 2023 was just the fourth time the team has won their division since the NFL and AFL merged in 1970. The Lions were also just three points shy of reaching their first Super Bowl.

The Lions didn't make any big splashes in free agency, instead, they focused on retaining their own players and turning to the draft to improve the roster. The biggest moves for Detroit were on the defensive side of the ball, where the team made additions to each level. Defensive tackle DJ Reader was brought in to anchor the defensive line, edge defender Marcus Davenport was signed after his failed one-year deal in Minnesota, linebacker Jalen Reeves-Maybin will now be manning the middle, while Amik Robertson signed a two-year deal and Carlton Davis III was acquired via trade to beef up Detroit's secondary.

Green Bay Packers

After trading Aaron Rodgers to New York last offseason, many expected the Packers to take a step back. Instead, it looks like they have ANOTHER franchise quarterback (Jordan Love) and will continue to be a threat in the NFC North.

The biggest free agent move in Green Bay was the addition of Josh Jacobs, who has been one of the best running backs in the NFL over the past few seasons. With the addition of Jacobs, the Packers released Aaron Jones (who signed a one-year deal in Minnesota). Green Bay also focused on upgrading the safety position, releasing three safeties (Rudy Ford, Jonathan Owens, and Darnell Savage) and signing one of the best free-agent safeties on the market (Xavier McKinney).

Chicago Bears

Thanks to last year's draft trade, the Chicago Bears own the Carolina Panther's first-round pick (first overall) in addition to their own pick (9th). With two top-10 draft picks, the Bears can change the direction of a franchise that has only made the playoffs seven times in the past 30 seasons.

All indications point to the Bears drafting quarterback Caleb Williams out of USC, one of the best QB prospects in recent memory. To make room, the Bears traded last year's starter, Justin Fields, to the Pittsburgh Steelers for a conditional 2025 sixth-round pick. To give Williams the best chance possible to succeed in a city that has never had a 4,000-yard passer, the Bears traded for wide receiver Keenan Allen and brought in running back D'Andre Swift through free agency. On the defensive side of the ball, the biggest move was re-signing cornerback Jaylon Johnson. The Bears also brought in safeties Kevin Byard and Jonathan Owens to replace recently released safety Eddie Jackson.

Groton Daily Independent

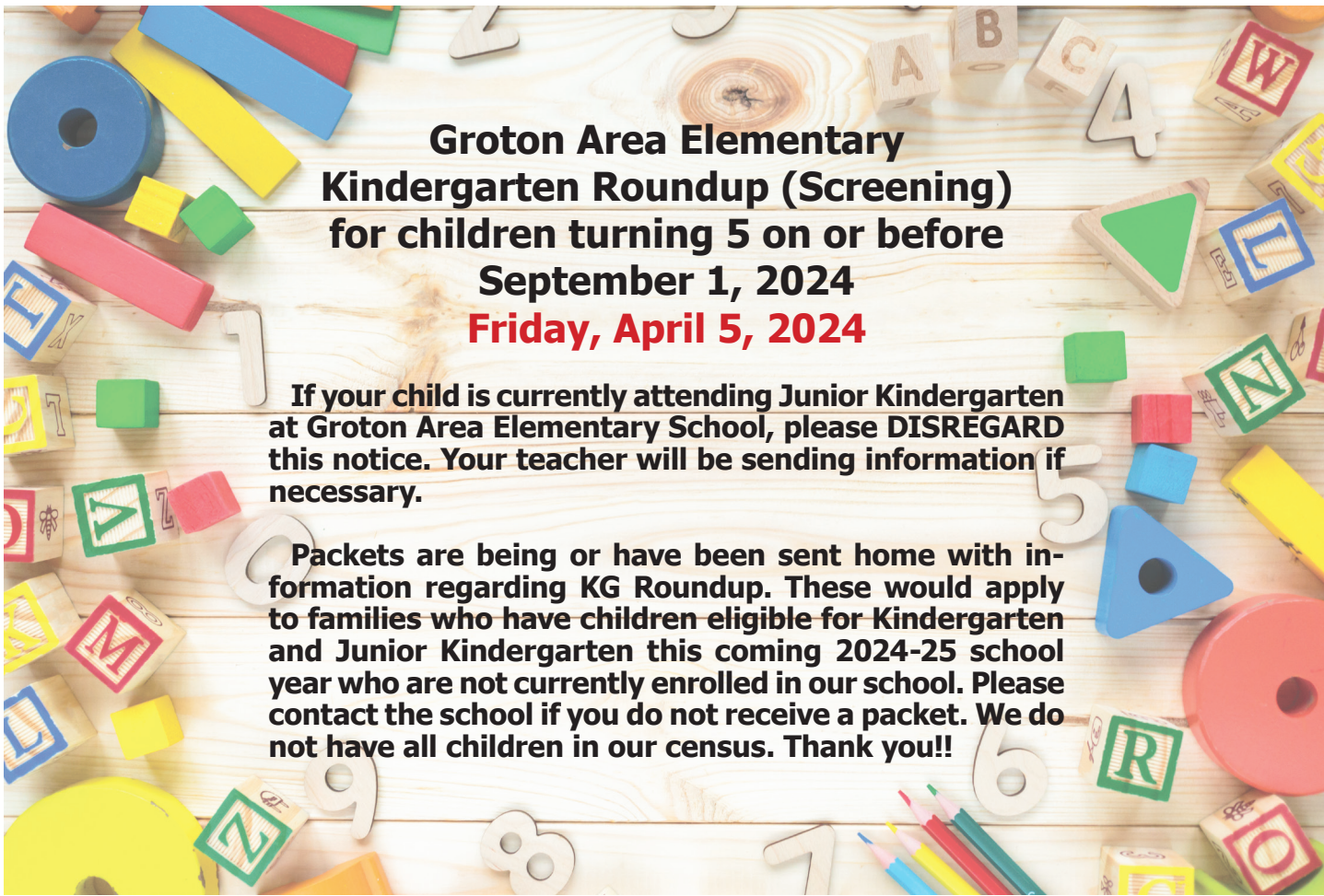
Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 4 of 51

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Living Heart Fitness Center
Exercise helps ease arthritis
pain and stiffness. - Mayo Clinic



Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on or before September 1, 2024 Friday, April 5, 2024

If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary School, please **DISREGARD** this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.

Packets are being or have been sent home with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten this coming 2024-25 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet. We do not have all children in our census. Thank you!!

“Joint replacement surgery: an individualized decision”

As a general internist who does primary care for adult and elderly patients, I talk to patients a lot about arthritis and joint replacement surgery. This type of surgery, also known as arthroplasty, is one of the most common types of elective surgery done in the United States. Knees, hips, and shoulders are the most frequently done arthroplasties, and most of those surgeries are done for severe osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis, is due to wear-and-tear of the joint, and becomes very common as we age. It often can cause debilitating pain and difficulty with function which, for some patients, warrants the intervention of surgery.

My patients often want to know when it is the right time for a joint replacement. Well, no x-ray or diagnostic test can tell us that. The decision to go ahead with arthroplasty is very much individualized to the patient. How severe are their symptoms? How risky is surgery for this particular patient? How much quality of life do they stand to gain from a successful arthroplasty?

While the orthopedic surgeon is the expert who patients should trust in talking about the risks and benefits of surgery itself, sometimes as a primary care provider who knows intricately my patient's medical history, general day-to-day life, and feelings about medical and surgical interventions, I can be helpful in guiding my patients facing this decision. Often I help nudge the reluctant patient who is suffering from severe arthritis toward choosing a surgery very likely to improve their quality of life. Rarely, I might help a patient with less to gain from a surgery reconsider its risk to benefit profile.

A couple years ago I surprised myself by encouraging my patient, then 95, to consider hip replacement surgery. I never thought I would urge a patient in their 90's to undergo elective surgery, but this particular patient was in excellent health and rendered unable to continue his beloved daily exercise because of his hip arthritis. The inability to exercise, for him, was a major problem for quality of life. He got his hip arthroplasty and enjoyed a couple more active years before his recent death.

So, if you are wondering whether you should go ahead with replacing that bothersome arthritic joint, there is no perfect formula that applies to everyone. But a primary care provider who knows you well can sure assist you in making the best decision for yourself.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD

EMPLOYMENT

Dairy Queen in Groton is hiring! If you're looking for a fun job with lots of variety, look no further! We're looking for energetic, smiling people – we provide free meals, uniforms, competitive wages, fun atmosphere and flexible scheduling. Part-time – day, evening, week-end shifts available. We will work with your schedule. Stop in today and pick up an application.

.....

Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to city.doug@nvc.net. Applications will be accepted until 5pm on April 16, 2024. Full job description and application may be found at <https://www.grotonsd.gov/o/grotoncity/page/employment-options>. For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.

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EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What was the point of eco-activists throwing soup at the Mona Lisa? Is defacing art and other great works of culture now some kind of tactic?

-- Ben Miller, Austin, TX

On Sunday, January 28, 2024 two women walked into the Louvre, went up to what may be the most famous painting in the world, and hurled pumpkin soup at the enticing smile of the Mona Lisa. On the women's t-shirts the words "FOOD RIPOSTE" could be read written in thick black marker. Da Vinci's iconic painting was protected behind safety glass and was unharmed, but many are confused on why the women would target the Mona Lisa.

The two women were a part of the French activist group the Riposte Alimentaire, or Food Retaliation group. The group is described as an organization advocating for government action on climate change and sustainable agriculture. As the women stood in front of the Mona Lisa they shouted, "What's the most important thing? Art, or the right to healthy and sustainable food?"

In the days preceding the attack, the French capital had seen widespread protests by farmers. They had used their tractors to set up road blockades and deter traffic across France. The protests were a call for the end to rising fuel costs, better pay for their produce, protection against cheap imports, and simplified government regulations. The Riposte Alimentaire's supported this goal and their website called for France's government to give people better access to food while providing farmers a sustainable income.

The big question is how does targeting the Mona Lisa help the Riposte Alimentaire achieve their goal of sustainable agriculture? Activists attacking art is not uncommon. In October 2022, Johannes Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" was attacked when two climate activists glued themselves to the painting while another threw a red substance into the artwork. Also in 2022, Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" was splashed with tomato soup by environmental activists. Claude Monet's "Les Meules" was targeted by activists from the Last Generation group and splattered with mashed potatoes.

What makes targeting famous artwork such a common tactic of activist groups? The main appeal of this strategy is that it is attention grabbing. When people hear that a well-known artwork was attacked the first instinct is to be scandalized. The second instinct is curiosity. They want to know why, who would possibly do such a thing. This allows activist groups to get substantial news coverage and attention for their organization. It is important to note that because of museum safety glass and other protection measures, no famous artwork has actually been damaged by activist actions. The attacks have been purely performative, meant to intrigue and enrage.

Radical civil disobedience and disruptive politics can also help make less aggressive activism tactics more welcome and even more successful in some cases. While attacking artwork may seem senseless, there is a strategy at hand. The end goal isn't necessarily public reaction, but to influence the big decision-makers in government.



Why would anyone deface artwork to raise awareness for environmental issues? The answer may just be that you are reading this article. credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Minnehaha tackles backlog of warrants, court cases with warrant resolution court pilot program

Officials say program's success depends on a review of cases in coming months

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 31, 2024 9:30 AM

At any given time in a year, there are roughly 15,000 warrants on file in Minnehaha County, any of which could lead to an arrest. Those crimes behind those warrants range from unpaid traffic tickets to assault or homicide.

To the criminal justice system, they're treated the same. Some are trivial in relation to larger crimes, but the backlog can clog up the system and cost taxpayer dollars, said Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead.

For those named on the warrants, failure to pay that traffic ticket can mean being thrown in jail, which could disrupt their life, stress relationships, cause job loss or create financial stress.

The recently completed pilot of a Warrant Resolution Court in Sioux Falls aims to show how counties can alleviate that stress on law enforcement and the court system.

"If we can resolve these low risk cases and still meet the needs of the victims in a cost effective and safe manner, that's a pretty good deal," Milstead said.

More than 170 warrants were resolved through four court dates with the pilot program over the winter.

The program let people with outstanding warrants for low-level crimes settle their warrants with the sheriff's department after-hours at the courthouse and talk with state's attorneys, public defenders and a judge to work out arrangements for a resolution. An interpreter was also available if needed.

Charges could include city ordinance violations, traffic violations, DUI first or second, and possession of drug paraphernalia. If someone came in for an offense that wasn't applicable, the court still worked to move their case along in the process.

The pilot program was led by Second Circuit Judge Robin Houwman and funded by a grant from the national nonprofit MacArthur Foundation. It was the first warrant resolution court in South Dakota, according to the state Unified Judicial System.

"It allows us more time to deal with the bigger cases during the day so we can focus on the people who are in custody, the more serious cases and clients that are in jail," said Traci Smith, public defender for Minnehaha County. "Every day that a person spends in jail, the harder it is for them to get back on track."

However, the pilot period has come to an end and it's unclear the program will continue.

While it'll take a few months to track if court participants followed through on their payment schedules and court dates, the Minnehaha State's Attorney Office had 62 pleas over the four court dates. A third saw the entire case resolved, including financial obligations.

"We'll see ultimately what happened to those other cases, and I think that'll determine whether it was successful or not," said Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Haggar.

Based on the eventual review, the county could decide to continue with the program with taxpayer money. The court cost around \$2,300 each night for staffing costs — whether 16 or 60 warrants were resolved — based on reimbursements from MacArthur Foundation.

In 2023, the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office served more than 14,000 warrants. About 1,200 of those were served through its walk-in warrants program, where people turn themselves in without posting a bond at the front office of the jail during business hours, Milstead said. The department has a searchable database for warrants online.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 9 of 51

"Walk-in is broader and allows us to get whatever the case is scheduled right away," Milstead said, adding that they'll resolve warrants that include victims. "It's a pretty effective program."

The State's Attorney's Office also has an on-call attorney to help people resolve their case.

Officials see advantages in the warrant court. The existing walk-in warrant program costs the person with the warrant \$25, whereas the new resolution court waived fees. People may be skeptical about whether they will be able to walk out of the jail too, Milstead added, and the walk-in program only addresses warrants. The next steps of moving a case through the system remain after the sheriff collects the \$25 payment and schedules a court date.

If the warrant resolution court is deemed successful, Smith would like to see it continued and eventually expanded.

People want to do the right thing when they come to the warrant resolution court, Smith said. A permanent warrant court program would show that the criminal justice system trusts them and allows them to be accountable and live their lives without fear.

She added that it's important to educate people about how to take care of warrants and about the importance of paying traffic tickets or any other fees.

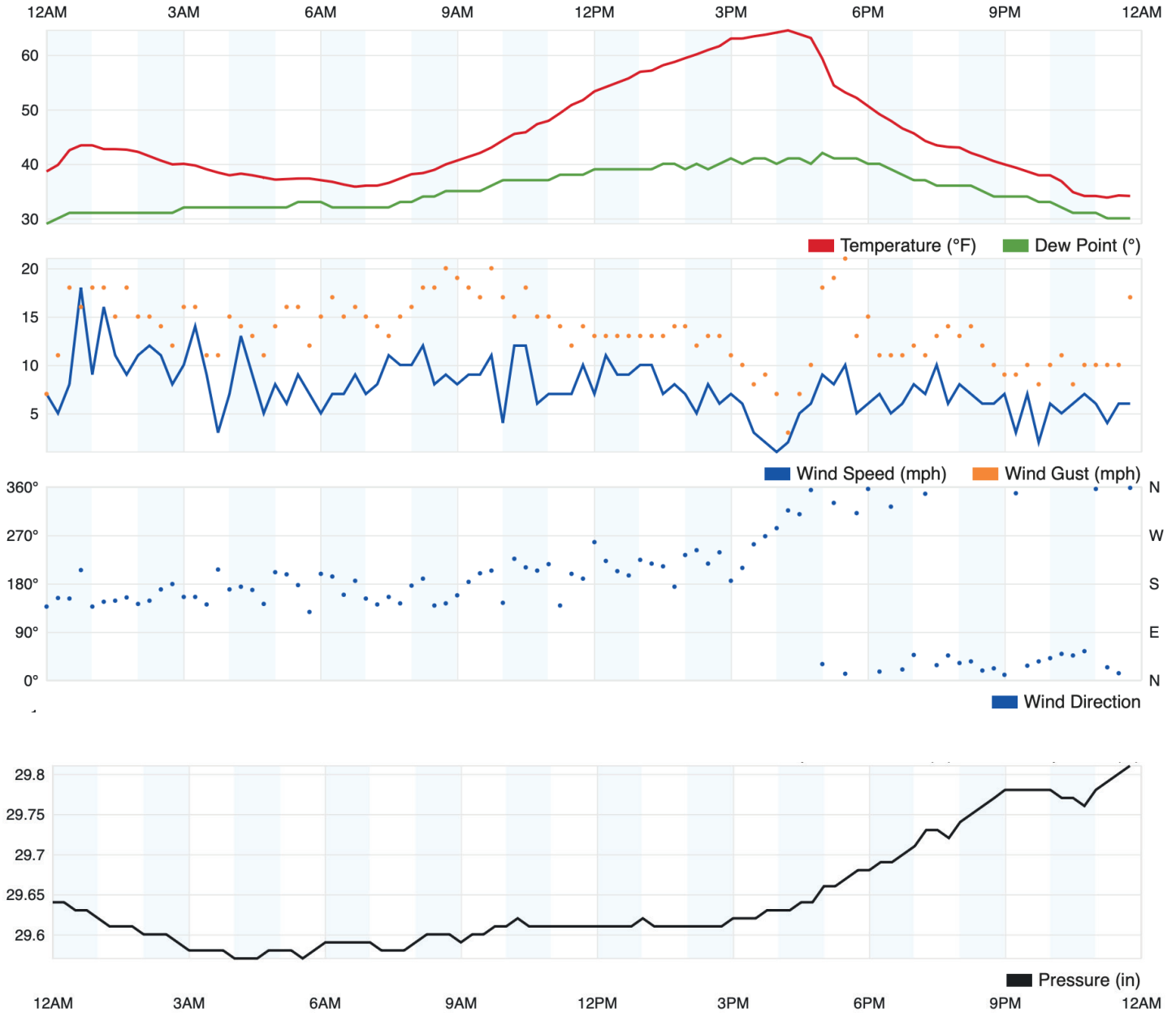
"In order to feel part of the community, people need to have a driver's license, feel like they can go to their kids' school and talk to teachers, to trust the courts and to trust that they're really looking out for their interest," Smith said. "There's always a fear of looking over your shoulder if you have a warrant. A simple traffic stop? You're going to jail. If an officer recognizes you at your kid's soccer game, are you going to jail?"

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 10 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 11 of 51

Today



Slight Chance
Snow then
Partly Sunny

High: 46 °F

Tonight



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 25 °F

Tuesday



Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 52 °F

Tuesday
Night



Mostly Clear
and Blustery
then Mostly
Clear

Low: 25 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 52 °F



Gradually Improving Weather Today

April 1, 2024
1:46 AM

Today –

- Snow possible this morning, improving conditions this afternoon
- Some accumulations (1-3") this morning SC South Dakota
- Highs 30s south, 40s north

Rest of the Week - More Spring-Like

Tuesday

Mainly dry, Highs 45-55°

Wednesday

Highs 40s east, 50s west

Thursday

Mild, highs in the 50s to near 60°

Friday

Milder, highs in the 60s

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Accumulating snow is still likely this morning over south central SD, but improving conditions are expected region-wide this afternoon.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 12 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 39 °F at 4:57 PM

Low Temp: 31 °F at 7:27 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 4:57 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 53 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 80 in 1928

Record Low: -0 in 1899

Average High: 51

Average Low: 26

Average Precip in April.: 0.04

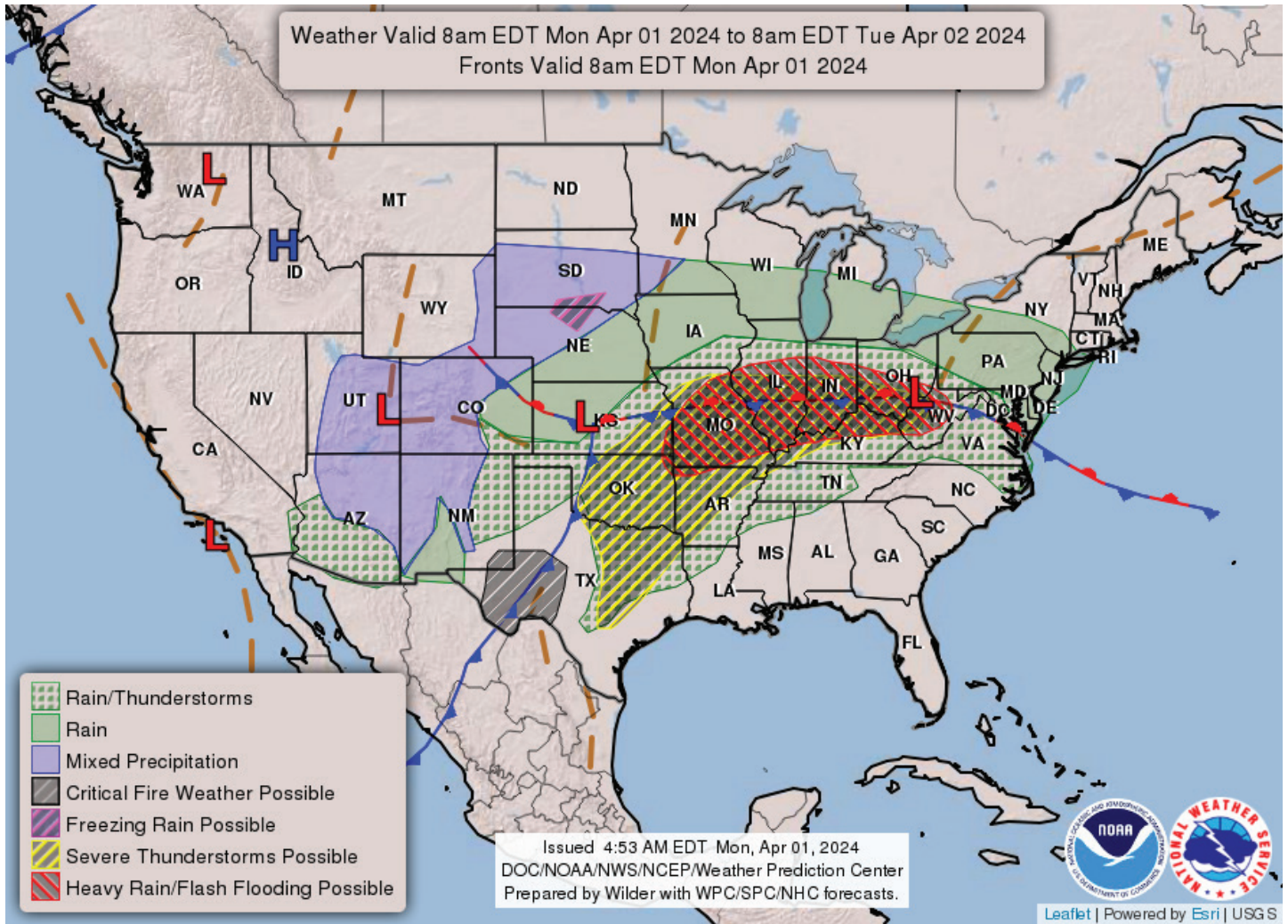
Precip to date in April: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 2.10

Precip Year to Date: 0.85

Sunset Tonight: 8:02:32 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07:38 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 13 of 51

Today in Weather History

April 1, 1960: Heavy snow of 4 to 10 inches fell in the eastern half of South Dakota. Some highways were closed mainly due to the difficulty of plowing the heavy, wet snow. Power and phone failures of short duration were caused by the snowfall in the Aberdeen area, which received 7.5 inches, setting the record for April 1st. Snow with high water content aggravated floods that were currently in progress on the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux Rivers.

April 1, 2011: Snowmelt flooding in March continued across much of central and northeast South Dakota as the rest of the snowpack melted into early April. Many roads along with many acres of crop and pastureland remained flooded. Roads, culverts, and bridges were damaged across the region. Several roads were washed out with many closed. Many homes were threatened with some surrounded by water. Rising lake levels in northeast South Dakota also threatened and flooded many homes. Many people had to use four-wheelers to get to their homes. A Presidential Disaster was declared for all counties due to the flooding damage. The total damage estimates, including March, were from 4.5 to 5 million dollars for the area. The flooding diminished across much of the area into May. The snowmelt flooding damaged many roads and highways, including U.S. Highway 81, throughout Hamlin County. Many roads were closed throughout the county. In the late evening of April 13th on U.S. Highway 81, a car with four people inside went through a flooded area at a high rate of speed and ended up in the flooded ditch. They all got out with no injuries. The snowmelt runoff caused Lake Kampeska to rise to nearly 44 inches overfull. The lake flooded several roads and also threatened many homes. Sandbagging was done to hold off the rising lake. Waves and ice chunks did eventually do some damage to homes. Also, many boat lifts were damaged. Mud Creek near Rauville also went slightly above the flood stage of 9 feet to 9.64 feet for a couple of days in early April.

1875: The London Times published the first daily newspaper weather map. The first American newspaper weather map would be issued on 5/12/1876 in the New York Herald. Weather maps would first appear on a regular basis beginning on 5/9/1879 in the New York Daily Graphic.

1912 - A tornado with incredible velocity ripped into downtown Houston, TX, breaking the water table and giving the city its first natural waterspout. (The Weather Channel)

1923 - Residents in the eastern U.S. awoke on "April Fool's Day" to bitterly cold temperatures. The mercury plunged to -34 degrees at Bergland MI and to 16 degrees in Georgia. (David Ludlum)

1960: The first weather satellite, TIROS 1 (Television and Infra-Red Observation Satellite) began sending pictures back to Earth. The TIROS series would have little benefit to operational weather forecasters because the image quality was low and inconsistent. The most critical understanding achieved from the new technology was the discovery of the high degree of organization of large-scale weather systems, a fact never apparent from ground and aircraft observations.

1973: A tornado touches down near Brentsville, Virginia, then traveled to Fairfax hitting Woodson High School. This F2 tornado injured 37 and caused \$14 million in damage.

1987 - Forty-five cities across the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 37 degrees at Apalachicola FL, 34 degrees at Jacksonville FL, 30 degrees at Macon GA, and 22 degrees at Knoxville TN, were records for April. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - A tornado touched down briefly during a snow squall on the south shore of White Fish Bay (six miles northwest of Bay Mills WI). A mobile home was unroofed and insulation was sucked from its walls. (The Weather Channel)

1988 - A powerful spring storm produced 34 inches of snow at Rye CO, 22 inches at Timpas OK, 19 inches at Sharon Springs KS, and up to 35 inches in New Mexico. Severe thunderstorms associated with the same storm spawned a tornado which caused 2.5 million dollars damage at East Mountain TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Up to six inches of snow blanketed the Adirondacks of eastern New York State and the Saint Lawrence Valley of Vermont. Up to a foot of snow blanketed the Colorado Rockies. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Texas, from southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana to southern Georgia, and from northern South Carolina to the Upper Ohio Valley during the day and evening. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado at Evergreen AL, and there were more than eighty reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail north of Bastrop LA, and produced damaging winds which injured one person west of Meridian MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 14 of 51

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"WHY DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS?"

Alfred Adler is known as one of the "founding fathers" of modern psychology. He is remembered mostly for his analysis of the impact of "birth order" – the "position" or "place" we have with our siblings, and how that influences our personality. He also developed what he called his "Fourteen-Day Cure Plan."

He claimed that this plan could cure anyone of mental illness in just fourteen days if they would just do exactly as he told them to do. For example - one day, a woman who was extremely depressed came to see him. He told her, "I can cure you of your depression in just fourteen days if you follow my advice."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"If you do one thing for someone else every day for fourteen days, at the end of that time, your depression will be cured," he told her.

She objected, "Why should I do something for someone else when no one ever does anything for me?"

Jokingly he responded, "Well, I guess because you are different, it will take you twenty-eight days. Adler realized that because she was so self-centered, there was little hope for her to change her behavior, and think of others rather than herself, and find relief.

Paul said that we are to "share each other's problems and troubles." Christians must never develop an attitude that entertains the idea that we are not responsible for helping others in their times of need. It is sometimes difficult to think of "service before self." But that is the way Jesus lived and died. As His disciples, can we do less?

Prayer: Lord, may we move from an attitude of self-centeredness to one of other-centeredness and see, hear, feel, and meet the needs of others as Your Son did. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2



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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 15 of 51

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- 9 Months..... \$42.60
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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 16 of 51



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.29.24

11 30 33 38 60 16

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$36,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 42
Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.24

9 17 34 48 52 5

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,550,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 57 Mins 37
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.31.24

1 4 13 26 27 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 12 Mins 36
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.24

1 15 19 30 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$40,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 12
Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.24

20 29 43 57 63 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 41 Mins 37
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.24

12 13 33 50 52 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$975,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 41 Mins 37
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Israeli troops withdraw from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest, after 2-week raid

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's military withdrew from Gaza's largest hospital early Monday after a two-week raid, in which it said it killed some 200 militants and detained hundreds more. Palestinian residents said the troops left behind several bodies and a vast swath of destruction.

The military has described the raid on Shifa Hospital as one of the most successful of the nearly six-month war. But it came at a time of mounting frustration in Israel, with tens of thousands protesting against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday and demanding he do more to bring home dozens of hostages held in Gaza. It was the largest anti-government demonstration since the start of the war.

The fighting showed that Hamas can still put up resistance even in one of the hardest-hit areas. Israel said it had largely dismantled Hamas in northern Gaza and withdrew thousands of troops late last year, leaving a security vacuum that has made it difficult to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid.

The military said that among those killed were senior Hamas operatives and other militants who had regrouped there after an earlier raid in November, and that it seized weapons and valuable intelligence.

The U.N. health agency said more than 20 patients died and dozens were put at risk during the raid, which brought even further destruction to a hospital that had already largely ceased to function.

Israel has accused Hamas of using hospitals for military purposes and has raided several medical facilities. Health officials in Gaza deny those allegations. Critics accuse the army of recklessly endangering civilians and of decimating a health sector already overwhelmed with war-wounded. Palestinians say Israeli troops forcibly evacuated homes near Shifa in downtown Gaza City and forced hundreds of residents to march south.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top military spokesman, said Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group had established their main northern headquarters inside the hospital. He described days of close-quarters fighting and blamed Hamas for the destruction, saying some fighters had barricaded themselves inside hospital wards while others launched mortar rounds at the compound.

He said the troops had arrested some 900 suspected militants during the raid, including more than 500 Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters, and seized over \$3 million in different currencies, as well as weapons.

He denied that any civilians had been harmed by Israeli forces, saying the army had evacuated more than 200 of the estimated 300 to 350 patients and delivered food, water and medical supplies to the rest. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the raid along with some 200 militants, the military said.

Mohammed Mahdi, who was among hundreds of Palestinians who returned to the area, described a scene of "total destruction." He said several buildings had been burned down and that he had counted six bodies in the area, including two in the hospital courtyard.

Video footage circulating online showed heavily damaged and charred buildings, mounds of dirt that had been churned up by bulldozers and patients on stretchers in darkened corridors.

Another resident, Yahia Abu Auf, said army bulldozers had even plowed up a makeshift cemetery in Shifa's courtyard.

"The situation is indescribable," he said. "The occupation destroyed all sense of life here."

At least 21 patients have died since the raid began, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted late Sunday on X, formerly Twitter.

He said over a hundred patients were still inside the compound, including four children and 28 critical patients. He also said there were no diapers, urine bags or water to clean wounds, and that many patients suffered from infected wounds and dehydration.

The military had previously raided Shifa in November, after saying Hamas maintained an elaborate command and control center inside and beneath the compound. It revealed a tunnel running beneath the

hospital that led to a few rooms, as well as weapons it said it had confiscated from inside medical buildings, but nothing on the scale of what it had alleged prior to that raid.

The war began on Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Israel responded with an air, land and sea offensive that has killed at least 32,782 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children have made up around two-thirds of those killed.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 13,000 Hamas fighters, without providing evidence, and blames the civilian death toll on Palestinian militants because they fight in dense residential areas.

The war has displaced most of the territory's population and driven a third of its residents to the brink of famine. Northern Gaza, where Shifa is located, has suffered vast destruction and has been largely isolated since October, leading to widespread hunger.

Even as Israel has turned its focus to other parts of Gaza this year, its troops have battled militants in the north on a number of occasions, and the two weeks of heavy fighting around Shifa highlighted the staying power of the armed groups.

Netanyahu has vowed to keep up the offensive until Hamas is destroyed and all of the hostages are freed. He says Israel will soon expand ground operations to the southern city of Rafah, where some 1.4 million people — more than half of Gaza's population — have sought refuge.

But he faces mounting pressure from Israelis who blame him for the security failures of Oct. 7 and from some families of the hostages who blame him for the failure to reach a deal despite several weeks of talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. Allied countries, including main backer the United States, have warned him against an invasion of Rafah.

Hamas and other militants are still believed to be holding some 100 hostages and the remains of 30 others, after freeing most of the rest during a cease-fire last November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Millions of recalled Hyundai and Kia vehicles with a dangerous defect remain on the road

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — In September, Hyundai and Kia issued a recall of 3.4 million of its vehicles in the United States with an ominous warning: The vehicles should be parked outdoors and away from buildings because they risked catching fire, whether the engines were on or off.

Six months later, most of those autos remain on the road — unrepaired — putting their owners, their families and potentially other people in danger of fires that could spread to garages, houses or other vehicles.

Hyundai and Kia have acknowledged that there's little hope of repairing most of the affected vehicles until June or later, roughly nine months after they announced the recalls. (Hyundai owns part of Kia, though the two companies operate independently.)

The two companies attributed the delays, in part, to the huge number of vehicles involved, among the largest recalls they've ever done. The fires, they say, have occurred when brake fluid leaked onto the circuit boards of antilock braking systems, triggering an electrical short and igniting the fluid.

The companies say they've been unable to obtain enough of the needed parts — fuses that reduce the boards' electrical currents — to fix most of the affected vehicles. Among them are some of their top-selling models for the 2010 through 2017 years, including Hyundai's Santa Fe and Elantra and Kia's Sportage and Forte.

Hyundai and Kia have urged the vehicles' owners to contact the companies or dealers if they see dashboard warning lights or smell something burning. In the meantime, both companies contend that despite the ongoing risks, the cars remain safe to drive.

When they announced the recalls in September, the two automakers reported that the defect had caused 56 vehicle fires and "thermal incidents," which include burning, melting and smoking. No injuries or deaths

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 19 of 51

have been reported, either before or since the recalls were announced.

Safety advocates complain, though, that the repairs are taking far longer than fixes from auto recalls normally do. Typically, such repairs begin in 10 weeks or less, though some can take longer if automakers cannot quickly determine the cause, which isn't the case with the Hyundai-Kia problem.

While awaiting repairs, owners of the affected vehicles need to park outside and away from other vehicles to minimize the risks. In the meantime, safety advocates note that if too much brake fluid leaks, it could impair braking or lengthen the distance required to stop a car.

The long-delayed repairs mark the latest in a long series of recalls involving engine fires on Hyundai and Kia vehicles that have bedeviled the two Korean automakers since 2015. All told, 13 million of their vehicles have been recalled for engine problems since 2010.

With the current recall, auto safety advocates say they're mystified about why it's taking so long for Hyundai and Kia to obtain the necessary fuses, a relatively simple part. Some also question whether a fuse will reliably solve the brake fluid leak. Some critics say the companies may be trying to save money by identifying the solution as a new fuse, which is far less expensive than fixing the fluid leaks.

"They're putting a Band-Aid on this thing," said Michael Brooks, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety. "It looks like it's a cheap fix instead of repairing the entire antilock brake system."

Advocates say they wonder, too, why regulators at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration haven't forced the companies to repair the leaks.

A NHTSA spokeswoman said the agency is monitoring the effectiveness of the recalls and "is working with the automakers to ensure the highest level of safety."

Hyundai has said that repairing the affected vehicles requires an intricate fuse assembly, with new covers and labels. Although just one fuse will be added to each vehicle, both automakers said they must obtain multiple types of new fuses to cover all models.

"To expedite the remedy," Hyundai said in a statement, "we are working closely with multiple suppliers, emphasizing the high priority of the recall, and ensuring quality for the replacement fuses."

A schedule that Hyundai filed with the government shows that owners won't start receiving letters advising them to take their cars in for repairs until April 22 at the earliest. Most of them won't get the letters until May or June — eight or nine months after the recalls were announced. Some owners of the affected Kia vehicles might not be notified until the end of June, documents say.

In a statement, Kia said the new fuses it's seeking were developed to prevent fires, "regardless of what the cause of the electrical short circuit condition may be." It said it's working with parts suppliers to accelerate production of the fuses.

Both companies said that besides adding a new fuse, dealers will fix any brake fluid leaks that might be found during inspections. Brake fluid can leak if O-rings, which seal the fluid, lose strength if exposed to moisture, dirt or other contaminants in the fluid, according to Hyundai documents filed with NHTSA. If the fluid level drops significantly, Hyundai said, the driver would see a warning light.

Since September, more than 500 owners have filed complaints accusing the automakers of taking an unreasonable amount of time to make repairs, a review of NHTSA records shows. The Hyundai and Kia fires have continued to occur while owners await repairs; at least five complainants have reported engine compartment fires.

Several complainants said they fear driving the vehicles and want NHTSA to force the companies to provide loaner cars or at least speed up the pace of repairs. Hyundai told dealers last year that they should provide loaners — at Hyundai's expense — for owners who don't feel safe driving their vehicles. After an inquiry from a reporter, Kia said it, too, would provide loaners.

Some complainants say they were confused by Hyundai statements saying the recalled vehicles can be driven even though they can catch fire while the engines are running.

"This safety recall sounds urgent and incredibly dangerous," an owner of a 2012 Hyundai Accent from Burbank, California, wrote in a complaint to NHTSA in December. (People who file complaints aren't identified in the NHTSA database.) The owner couldn't understand why Hyundai would say the Accent is safe

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 20 of 51

to drive yet admit that it can still catch fire while being driven.

Both companies said that while fires remain rare, if they do happen, owners would smell smoke or see warning lights on the dashboard. The warnings would "allow for a safe exit from the vehicle," Kia's statement said.

But Brooks of the Center for Auto Safety argues that it's irresponsible for the companies to assure owners that the vehicles are safe to drive when they know fires are possible. If smoke or warning lights should appear, he said, the companies can't predict how long the occupants would have to escape or free children or other passengers who might be unable to get out on their own.

"There are a lot of (fire) situations where consumers simply weren't aware," Brooks said. "That is going to compromise the time they have to escape the vehicle if there's a fire." He urged every owner of a recalled vehicle to seek a loaner car from the companies.

Another complainant, from Austin, Texas, called on NHTSA to force Hyundai to fix the fluid leaks.

"They do not appear to be fixing the root cause of the issue," wrote the complainant, the owner of a 2013 Hyundai Tucson. "Leaking brake systems are a safety concern of the highest magnitude, right up there with tires and steering. This is just insane."

Ellen Maisano of Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania, said she parked her 2011 Kia Soul in her yard for four months until trading it in last January out of frustration with the slow repairs.

"I don't want to be on the highway and catch on fire," said Maisano, who also complained to NHTSA, which, in turn, referred her to Kia.

Nor did she want to leave the Soul near other vehicles in her workplace parking lot. And she worried about parking it in her garage.

"All I need is the garage to go up in flames," she said.

Maisano and her partner had to share his car to commute to work, which became difficult after four months. Neither Kia nor her dealership nor her insurance company, she said, would pay for a rental car. So she decided to pony up \$23,000 for a used Honda HR-V, with a monthly payment of \$410 that she hadn't wanted to spend.

Like some other owners, Maisano said she also worried, in light of an epidemic of Hyundai and Kia thefts, about her Kia being stolen when left outdoors. Many of the vehicles being recalled for potential fires also are at risk of being stolen if parked outside because they lack computer chips in the keys and ignitions that must match up before the engines can be started.

Thieves were able to easily steal the cars with a screwdriver and a USB cable, a method that was shared on videos on TikTok and other social media sites. To try to stop the thefts, Hyundai and Kia issued software updates in February 2023 and offered free steering wheel locks.

Documents that Hyundai and Kia filed with regulators show that the companies have traced the fire problem to brake control units made by Mando, a South Korean supplier. In October, after the Hyundai and Kia recalls, Mando issued its own recall, for 3.4 million anti-lock brake modules that can leak fluid.

Some of those modules also went to General Motors, which said it positions them differently from Hyundai and Kia. GM said it doesn't know of any incidents involving the modules, and an internal investigation determined that there was no risk to customers.

Mando did not return messages seeking comment.

In November, NHTSA began investigating whether Hyundai and Kia should have acted faster to recall vehicles with Mando control units that could catch fire. Since 2016, each automaker has announced eight recalls, covering about 6.4 million vehicles with the brake units.

NHTSA documents show 92 fires attributed to vehicles in the 16 recalls, including the ones announced in September. In 2020, NHTSA forced both automakers to pay \$137 million in fines and for safety improvements for being too slow to recall vehicles with engine problems.

Sean Kane, president of Safety Research & Strategies, which conducts research for lawyers that sue automakers, said that while he welcomes NHTSA's investigation, the agency should have required more recalls and repairs sooner.

"It's remarkable that it's gone on as long as it has without much scrutiny," Kane said. "I don't think this problem is over yet in terms of the recall situation."

South Korea's Yoon vows not to back down in the face of doctors' strike over medical school plan

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president vowed Monday not to back down in the face of vehement protests by doctors seeking to derail his plan to drastically increase medical school admissions, as he called their walkouts "an illegal collective action" that poses "a grave threat to our society."

About 12,000 medical interns and residents in South Korea have been on strike for six weeks, causing hundreds of cancelled surgeries and other treatments at university hospitals. In support of their action, many senior doctors at their teaching schools have also submitted resignations though they haven't stopped treating patients.

Officials say they want to raise the yearly medical school cap by 2,000 from the current 3,058 to create more doctors to deal with the country's rapidly aging population. Doctors counter that schools can't handle such an abrupt increase in students and that it would eventually hurt the country's medical services. But critics say doctors, one of the best-paid professions in South Korea, are simply worried that the supply of more doctors would result in lower future incomes.

Public surveys show that a majority of ordinary South Koreans support the government plan. But observers say many people are increasingly fed up with the protracted confrontation between the government and doctors, threatening to deal a blow to governing party candidates ahead of next week's parliamentary elections.

In a nationally televised address, President Yoon Suk Yeol said adding 2,000 medical students is the minimum increase needed to address a shortage of physicians in rural areas, the military and essential but low-paying professions like pediatrics and emergency departments. Yoon said South Korea's doctor-to-patient ratio — 2.1 physicians per 1,000 people — is far below the average of 3.7 in the developed world.

"Increasing the number of doctors is a state project that we can't further delay," Yoon said.

Yoon urged the striking doctors to return to work, saying they have a responsibility to protect people's lives in line with the local medical law. He also said the government remains open to talks if doctors come up with a unified proposal that adequately explains their calls for a much smaller increase in the medical school enrollment quota.

"I can't tolerate an attempt to carry through their thoughts by force without due logic and grounds," Yoon said. "The illegal collective action by some doctors has become a grave threat to our society."

Yoon said the recruitment plan won't lead to lower earnings for doctors, citing what he called expected increases in national income and demand for medical services in the fast-aging society. He said the average income of South Korean doctors is the highest in the developed world.

Later Monday, the Korean Medical Association, which represents doctors in South Korea, criticized Yoon for repeating what his government has already argued to support the recruitment plan.

"It was an address that brought us greater disappointment because we had high hopes" for some changes in the government's position, Kim Sung-geun, a spokesperson for KMA's emergency committee, told reporters.

Yoon said the government is taking final administrative steps to suspend the licenses of the strikers but added he doesn't want to punish the young doctors. This implies that his government is willing to soften punitive measures on the strikers if they return to work soon.

Yoon recently ordered officials to pursue "a flexible measure" to resolve the dispute and seek constructive consultations with doctors at the request of ruling party leader Han Dong-hoon.

It's unclear if the government and doctors can find a breakthrough to settle their standoff anytime soon. Last week, KMA elected Lim Hyun-taek, a hardliner who has called for a decrease in the medical school

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 22 of 51

admission cap, as its new chief.

After his election Tuesday, Lim said that doctors can sit down for talks with the government if Yoon apologizes and dismisses top health officials involved in the recruitment plan. Lim also threatened to launch an all-out fight if any doctors receive punitive steps over their recent protests.

The striking junior doctors represent a fraction of the total doctors in South Korea — estimated at 115,000 by Yoon and 140,000 by a doctors' association. But in some major hospitals, they account for about 30% to 40% of doctors, assisting qualified doctors and department chiefs during surgeries and other treatments while training.

Doctors say the government enrollment plan lacks measures to resolve key medical issues such as how to increase the number of physicians in some key but unpopular professions. They say newly recruited students would also try to work in the capital region and in high-paying fields like plastic surgery and dermatology. They say the government plan would also likely result in doctors performing unnecessary treatments due to increased competition.

Here's what you need to know about the world's largest democratic election kicking off in India

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The world's largest democratic election could also be one of its most consequential.

With a population of over 1.4 billion people and close to 970 million voters, India's general election pits Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an avowed Hindu nationalist, against a broad alliance of opposition parties that are struggling to play catch up.

The 73-year-old Modi first swept to power in 2014 on promises of economic development, presenting himself as an outsider cracking down on corruption. Since then, he has fused religion with politics in a formula that has attracted wide support from the country's majority Hindu population.

India under Modi is a rising global power, but his rule has also been marked by rising unemployment, attacks by Hindu nationalists against minorities, particularly Muslims, and a shrinking space for dissent and free media.

HOW DOES THE ELECTION WORK?

The 6-week-long general election starts on April 19 and results will be announced on June 4. The voters, who comprise over 10% of the world's population, will elect 543 members for the lower house of Parliament for a five-year term.

The polls will be held in seven phases and ballots cast at more than a million polling stations. Each phase will last a single day with several constituencies across multiple states voting that day. The staggered polling allows the government to deploy tens of thousands of troops to prevent violence and transport election officials and voting machines.

India has a first-past-the-post multiparty electoral system in which the candidate who receives the most votes wins. To secure a majority, a party or coalition must breach the mark of 272 seats.

While voters in the United States and elsewhere use paper ballots, India uses electronic voting machines.

WHO IS RUNNING?

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and his main challenger, Rahul Gandhi of the Indian National Congress, represent Parliament's two largest factions. Several other important regional parties are part of an opposition bloc.

Opposition parties, which have been previously fractured, have united under a front called INDIA, or Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, to deny Modi a third straight election victory.

The alliance has fielded a single primary candidate in most constituencies. But it has been roiled by ideological differences and personality clashes, and has not yet decided on its candidate for prime minister.

Most surveys suggest Modi is likely to win comfortably, especially after he opened a Hindu temple in northern Ayodhya city in January, which fulfilled his party's long-held Hindu nationalist pledge.

Another victory would cement Modi as one of the country's most popular and important leaders. It would

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 23 of 51

follow a thumping win in 2019, when the BJP clinched an absolute majority by sweeping 303 parliamentary seats. The Congress party managed only 52 seats.

WHAT ARE THE BIG ISSUES?

For decades, India has clung doggedly to its democratic convictions, largely due to free elections, an independent judiciary, a thriving media, strong opposition and peaceful transition of power. Some of these credentials have seen a slow erosion under Modi's 10-year rule, with the polls seen as a test for the country's democratic values.

Many watchdogs have now categorized India as a "hybrid regime" that is neither a full democracy nor a full autocracy.

The polls will also test the limits of Modi, a populist leader whose rise has seen increasing attacks against religious minorities, mostly Muslims. Critics accuse him of using a Hindu-first platform, endangers the country's secular roots.

Under Modi, the media, once viewed as vibrant and largely independent, have become more pliant and critical voices muzzled. Courts have largely bent to Modi's will and given favorable verdicts in crucial cases. Centralization of executive power has strained India's federalism. And federal agencies have bogged down top opposition leaders in corruption cases, which they deny.

Another key issue is India's large economy, which is among the fastest growing in the world. It has helped India emerge as a global power and a counterweight to China. But even as India's growth soars by some measures, the Modi government has struggled to generate enough jobs for young Indians, and instead has relied on welfare programs like free food and housing to woo voters.

The U.N.'s latest Asia-Pacific Human Development Report lists India among the top countries with high income and wealth inequality.

A biased test kept thousands of Black people from getting a kidney transplant. It's finally changing

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jazmin Evans had been waiting for a new kidney for four years when her hospital revealed shocking news: She should have been put on the transplant list in 2015 instead of 2019 — and a racially biased organ test was to blame.

As upsetting as that notification was, it also was part of an unprecedented move to mitigate the racial inequity. Evans is among more than 14,000 Black kidney transplant candidates so far given credit for lost waiting time, moving them up the priority list for their transplant.

"I remember just reading that letter over and over again," said Evans, 29, of Philadelphia, who shared the notice in a TikTok video to educate other patients. "How could this happen?"

At issue is a once widely used test that overestimated how well Black people's kidneys were functioning, making them look healthier than they really were — all because of an automated formula that calculated results for Black and non-Black patients differently. That race-based equation could delay diagnosis of organ failure and evaluation for a transplant, exacerbating other disparities that already make Black patients more at risk of needing a new kidney but less likely to get one.

A few years ago, the National Kidney Foundation and American Society of Nephrology prodded laboratories to switch to race-free equations in calculating kidney function. Then the U.S. organ transplant network ordered hospitals to use only race-neutral test results in adding new patients to the kidney waiting list.

"The immediate question came up: What about the people on the list right now? You can't just leave them behind," said Dr. Martha Pavlakis of Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and former chair of the network's kidney committee.

Pavlakis calls what happened next an attempt at restorative justice: The transplant network gave hospitals a year to uncover which Black kidney candidates could have qualified for a new kidney sooner if not for the race-based test — and adjust their waiting time to make up for it. That lookback continues for each newly listed Black patient to see if they, too, should have been referred sooner.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 24 of 51

Between January 2023 and mid-March, more than 14,300 Black kidney transplant candidates have had their wait times modified, by an average of two years, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, which runs the transplant system. So far more than 2,800 of them, including Evans, have received a transplant.

But it's just one example of a larger problem permeating health care. Numerous formulas or "algorithms" used in medical decisions — treatment guidelines, diagnostic tests, risk calculators — adjust the answers according to race or ethnicity in a way that puts people of color at disadvantage.

Given how embedded these equations are in medical software and electronic records, even doctors may not realize how widely they impact care decisions.

"Health equity scholars have been raising alarm bells about the way race has been misused in clinical algorithms for decades," said Dr. Michelle Morse, New York City's chief medical officer.

Change is beginning, slowly. No longer are obstetricians supposed to include race in determining the risk of a pregnant woman attempting vaginal birth after a prior C-section. The American Heart Association just removed race from a commonly used calculator of people's heart disease risk. The American Thoracic Society has urged replacing race-based lung function evaluation.

The kidney saga is unique because of the effort to remedy a past wrong.

"Lots of time when we see health inequities, we just assume there's nothing we can do about it," Morse said. "We can make changes to restore faith in the health system and to actually address the unfair and avoidable outcomes that Black people and other people of color face."

Black Americans are over three times more likely than white people to experience kidney failure. Of the roughly 89,000 people currently on the waiting list for a new kidney, about 30% are Black.

Race isn't a biological factor like age, sex or weight — it's a social construct. So how did it make its way into calculations of kidney function?

The eGFR, or estimated glomerular filtration rate, evaluates kidney health based on how quickly a waste compound called creatinine gets filtered from blood. Because of a long-ago false theory about differences in creatinine levels, many lab reports until recently often would list two results — one calculated for non-Black patients and another for Black patients that could overestimate kidney function by as much as 16%.

Not every Black kidney candidate was affected. Some may have had kidney failure diagnosed without that test. For others to have a chance at benefitting from UNOS' mandated lookback, transplant center staff-turned-detectives often worked after hours and weekends, hunting years-old records for a test that, recalculated without the race adjustment, might make the difference.

"You're reaching out to the nephrologist, their primary care doctors, the dialysis units to get those records," said Dr. Pooja Singh of Jefferson Health's transplant institute in Philadelphia, where Evans received her new kidney. "That first patient getting transplanted for us was such a great moment for our program that the work didn't feel like work after that."

A high school sports physical first spotted Evans' kidney disease at age 17. While finishing her master's degree and beginning to earn her Ph.D. at Temple University, she started dialysis — for nine hours a night while she slept — and was placed on the transplant list.

How long it takes to get a kidney transplant depends on patients' blood type, medical urgency and a mix of other factors — including how long they've spent on the waiting list. Evans was first listed in April 2019. When the Jefferson transplant center unearthed her old lab tests, they found she should have qualified in September 2015.

"Just for context, when I was still an undergrad I should have been on the list," she said, recalling the anger she felt as she read the letter. What she called "a mind-blowing" credit of 3½ more years waiting also provided "a glimmer of hope" that she'd be offered a matching kidney soon.

Evans got a new kidney on July 4 and is healthy again, and grateful the policy change came in time for her.

"You don't know if people would be alive today" if it had been enacted earlier, she said. Still, that extra step of "making amends to fix the situation for those that we can — I feel like it's very important and it's very necessary if you're truly wanting to bring more equity and equality into the medical field."

In Taiwan, a group is battling fake news one conversation at a time — with a focus on seniors

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Their days often began at the crack of dawn.

They'd head out to a church, a temple, a park and set up a stall. They'd seek out seniors in particular, those who are perhaps the most vulnerable citizens of the information-saturated society that has enveloped them. To get people to stop and listen, they'd offer free bars of soap — a metaphor for the scrubbing that they were undertaking.

They'd talk to people, ask them about their lives and their media consumption habits. They'd ask: How has fake news hurt you? They'd teach techniques to punch through the static, to see the illogic in conspiracy theories, to find the facts behind the false narratives that can sometimes shape our lives.

Nearly six years later, with just one formal employee and a team of volunteers, Fake News Cleaner has hosted more than 500 events, connecting with college students, elementary-school children — and the seniors that, some say, are the most vulnerable to such efforts.

Its people are filling up lecture halls and becoming a key voice in an effort as pressing here as anywhere: scrubbing Taiwan of disinformation and the problems it causes, one case at a time.

BATTLING THE EFFECTS OF STORIES THAT AREN'T REAL

Like any democratic society, Taiwan is flooded with assorted types of disinformation. It touches every aspect of a person's life, from conspiracy theories on vaccines to health claims aimed at promoting supplements to rumors about major Taiwanese companies leaving the island.

Despite its very public nature, disinformation has a deeply personal impact — particularly among Taiwan's older people. It thrives in the natural gaps between people that come from generational differences and a constantly updating tech landscape, then enlarges those gaps to cause rifts.

"They have no way to communicate," says Melody Hsieh, who co-founded the group with Shu-huai Chang in 2018. "This entire society is being torn apart, and this is a terrible thing."

Chuang Tsai-yu, sitting in on a recent lecture by the group in Taipei, once saw a message online that told people to hit their chest in a way that would save them in the case of heart discomfort. She said she actually tried it out herself.

Later, she asked her doctor about it. His advice: Go directly to the emergency room and get checked for a heart attack.

"We really do believe the things people will send us," Chuang says. "Because when you're older, we don't have as much of a grasp on the outside world. Some of these scammers, they will write it in a way that's very believable."

Chuang is fortunate: Her son has explained some of the things she sees on her phone — including disinformation about health on the Line app. Not everyone is as lucky, though. When it comes to misinformation, there's a lot of work to do.

Taiwan is already home to several established fact-checking organizations. There's Co-Facts, a well known AI-driven fact-checking bot founded by a group of civic hackers. There are the Taiwan Fact Check Center and MyGoPen. But such organizations presume that you're at least somewhat tech-savvy — that you can find a fact-check organization's website or add a fact-checking bot.

Yet many of the people most affected are the least tech-savvy. Fake News Cleaner believes addressing this gap requires an old-school approach: going offline. At the heart of the group's work is approaching people with patience and respect while educating them about the algorithms and norms that drive the platforms they use.

Hsieh says she was moved after seeing too many instances of division because of fake news: a couple that divorced, a mom who kicked her kid out of the house. Many such stories surfaced in 2018 when Taiwan held a national referendum on a number of social issues including on nuclear energy, sex education, and gay marriage.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 26 of 51

At their second-ever event, Hsieh and Chang met a victim of fake news. A vegetable seller told them he'd lost sales because people had read that the vegetable fern he planted and sold, known locally as guomao, caused cancer. Business faded, and the vendor had to sell off part of his land. For a year, even restaurants didn't order from him.

Keep up the work, he told them — it's needed.

DETERMINING WHY FAKE NEWS IS SO COMPELLING

At a community center hosted by Bangkah Church in Taipei's Wanhua neighborhood, a crowd of seniors listen to 28-year old Tseng Yu-huan speak on behalf of Fake News Cleaner.

The attendees, many of whom come daily to the church's college for seniors, are learning why fake news is so compelling. Tseng shows them some sensational headlines. One: A smoothie mix of sweet potato leaves and milk was said to be a detox drink. Another: rumors that COVID-19 was being spread from India because of dead bodies in rivers. He used mostly examples from Line, a Korean messaging app popular in Taiwan.

With just one formal employee and a team of volunteers, Fake News Cleaner has combed Taiwan's churches, temples, small fishing villages and parks, spreading awareness. While they started with a focus on seniors, the group has also lectured at colleges and even elementary schools. Early on, to catch their target audience, Hsieh and her co-founders would get to the hiking trails near her home by 5 a.m. to set up a stall while offering free bars of soap to entice people to stop and listen.

Now the group has a semester-long course at a community college in Kaohsiung, in addition to their lectures all across Taiwan, from fishing villages to community centers.

For Hsieh, her personal experience helped shape the approach to battling disinformation.

In 2018, ahead of a referendum on gay marriage, Hsieh had started to lobby her father. He was well-respected in their community and could command a lot of votes. "I wanted his vote," Hsieh says.

It seemed unlikely: She says he opposed gay marriage and had said homophobic things. The two had often clashed on this issue before, she says, devolving into screaming matches to the point where he had thrown things on the floor. But when she decided to change his mind, Hsieh discovered a new level of patience.

"After we fight, the same night, I'd apologize, and say my attitude is very bad," she says. "And I'd make him a cup of milk or a coffee, and then after he started feeling better, I'd say 'But! I believe ...'"

Through the course of three to four months, Hsieh lobbied her father, sending him articles to counter the things he had been reading online or explaining patiently what the facts were. For example, he had read online that AIDS came from gay people. In actuality, the virus was actually from chimpanzees and had made the leap to human hosts in the 20th century.

What finally turned the page after months of lobbying, Hsieh says: She connected the issue to her father's personal experience.

When he first started doing business, decades ago, some Taiwanese suppliers did not want to sell to him because he'd come from China after the civil war between the Communists and the Nationalist party. When he proposed, his future wife's father threatened suicide because he was not of "Taiwanese" background. Hsieh saw an opportunity in that.

"Just because they're gay they can't marry the person they love?" she asked, confronting him.

Her father, Hsieh says, is now a staunch supporter of gay marriage.

MISINFORMATION UNDERMINES EVEN DAILY INTERACTIONS

Fake News Cleaner avoids politics and takes no funding from the government or political parties. This is because of Taiwan's highly polarized political environment, where media outlets are often referred to by the color of the political party they back. Instead, the group focuses lectures on everyday topics like health and diet or economic scams.

Hsieh's experience with her father informs how volunteers interact with their students — an approach that goes beyond showing people a fact-check claim. The key is to teach people to think about what they're consuming. "What we are dealing with is not about true or false," says Tseng, the teacher. "It's actually about family relationships and tech."

At Bangkah Church, the audience watches Tseng as he lectures the audience about content farms, websites that aggregate content or generate their own articles regardless of the truth, and how these content farms make money. He also asks: Do the articles have bylines? Who wrote them?

Fake news relies on emotion to generate clicks. So often, headlines are sensational and appeal directly to three types of emotions: hatred, panic or surprise. A click or a page view means more money for the websites, Tseng explains. The retirees watch him, engrossed.

Everything goes smoothly until it comes time to work with the technology, Tseng tries to get his students to add the Line account of MyGoPen, a well-established Taiwanese fact-checking organization. A step that typically takes a minute ended up taking 20. Teaching assistants scour the room, helping seniors. Loudness and confusion prevail.

Many elderly people end up with expensive phones bought by their children that they don't know how to use, says Moon Chen, Fake News Cleaner's secretary-general. Sometimes their children open a Facebook or Line account for them but don't explain the phone's fundamentals.

That produces trouble. Algorithms serve up pages that the phone user hasn't followed to fill up the page, the provenance of information becomes hazy and people can get confused.

After the class, seniors could be heard saying they could ask a question to MyGoPen, the fact-checking bot they were told to add.

Lin Wei-kun, a Taipei resident, who attended the class, said he knows better than to believe all the information that he sees online, especially the ones that claim miracle uses for everyday foods. But he appreciated the group's class because he says many people out there do believe it.

"These days, there's a lot of information online. I usually just delete it," he says. "For example, cilantro is just a garnish. But if they write a post saying cilantro has these miraculous uses, a lot of people out there would believe it."

It's one more small step forward in Fake News Cleaner's mandate — one person in Taiwan learning one thing, and becoming a bit more aware of a virtual world of misinformation that grows more complex by the day.

Israelis stage largest protest since war began to increase pressure on Netanyahu

By MELANIE LINDMAN, WAFAA SHURAF, and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Tens of thousands of Israelis thronged central Jerusalem on Sunday in the largest anti-government protest since the country went to war in October. Protesters urged the government to reach a cease-fire deal to free dozens of hostages held in Gaza by Hamas militants and to hold early elections.

Israeli society was broadly united immediately after Oct. 7, when Hamas killed some 1,200 people during a cross-border attack and took 250 others hostage. Nearly six months of conflict have renewed divisions over the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, though the country remains largely in favor of the war.

Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas and bring all the hostages home, yet those goals have been elusive. While Hamas has suffered heavy losses, it remains intact.

Roughly half the hostages in Gaza were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November. But attempts by international mediators to bring home the remaining hostages have failed. Talks resumed on Sunday with no signs that a breakthrough was imminent.

Hostages' families believe time is running out, and they are getting more vocal about their displeasure with Netanyahu.

"We believe that no hostages will come back with this government because they're busy putting sticks in the wheels of negotiations for the hostages," said Boaz Atzili, whose cousin, Aviv Atzili and his wife, Liat, were kidnapped on Oct. 7. Liat was released but Aviv was killed, and his body is in Gaza. "Netanyahu is only working in his private interests."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 28 of 51

PROTESTERS HAVE MANY GRIEVANCES

Protesters blame Netanyahu for the failures of Oct. 7 and say the deep political divisions over his attempted judicial overhaul last year weakened Israel ahead of the attack. Some accuse him of damaging relations with the United States, Israel's most important ally.

Netanyahu is also facing a litany of corruption charges which are slowly making their way through the courts, and critics say his decisions appear to be focused on political survival over the national interest. Opinion polls show Netanyahu and his coalition trailing far behind their rivals if elections were held today.

Unless his governing coalition falls apart sooner, Netanyahu won't face elections until spring of 2026.

Many families of hostages had refrained from publicly denouncing Netanyahu to avoid antagonizing the leadership and making the hostages' plight a political issue. But as their anger grows, some now want to change course — and they played a major role in Sunday's anti-government protest.

The crowd on Sunday stretched for blocks around the Knesset, or parliament building, and organizers vowed to continue the demonstration for several days. They urged the government to hold new elections nearly two years ahead of schedule. Thousands also demonstrated Sunday in Tel Aviv, where there was a large protest the night before.

Netanyahu, in a nationally televised speech before undergoing hernia surgery later Sunday, said he understood families' pain. But he said calling new elections — in what he described as a moment before victory — would paralyze Israel for six to eight months and stall the hostage talks. For now, Netanyahu's governing coalition appears to remain firmly intact.

Some hostage families agree that now is not the time for elections.

"I don't think that changing the prime minister now is what will advance and help my son to come home," Sheli Shem Tov, whose son Omer was kidnapped from a music festival, told Israel's Channel 12. "To go to elections now will just push to the side the most burning issue, which is to return the hostages home."

In his Sunday address, Netanyahu also repeated his vow for a military ground offensive in Rafah, the southern Gaza city where more than half of territory's population of 2.3 million now shelters after fleeing fighting elsewhere. "There is no victory without going into Rafah," he said, adding that U.S. pressure would not deter him. Israel's military says Hamas battalions remain there.

In another reminder of Israel's divisions, a group of reservists and retired officers demonstrated in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood.

Ultra-Orthodox men for generations have received exemptions from military service, which is compulsory for most Jewish men and women. Resentment over that has deepened during the war. Netanyahu's government has been ordered to present a new plan for a more equitable draft law by Monday.

Netanyahu, who relies heavily on the support of ultra-Orthodox parties, last week asked for an extension.

The Bank of Israel said in its annual report on Sunday that there could be economic damage if large numbers of ultra-Orthodox men continue not to serve in Israel's military.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE HITS TENT CAMP AT HOSPITAL

Also Sunday, an Israeli airstrike hit a tent camp in the courtyard of a crowded hospital in central Gaza, killing two Palestinians and wounding another 15, including journalists working nearby.

An Associated Press reporter filmed the strike and aftermath at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where thousands of people have sheltered. The Israeli military said it struck a command center of the Islamic Jihad militant group.

Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in Gaza's hospitals, viewing them as relatively safe from airstrikes. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of operating in and around medical facilities, which Gaza's health officials deny.

Israeli troops have been raiding Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest, for nearly two weeks and say they have killed scores of fighters, including senior Hamas operatives. Gaza's Health Ministry said more than 100 patients remain with no potable water and septic wounds, while doctors use plastic bags for gloves.

Not far from Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, dozens of members of Gaza's tiny Palestinian Christian community gathered at the Holy Family Church to celebrate Easter, with incense wafting through the rare building that appeared untouched by war.

"We are here with sadness," attendee Winnie Tarazi said. About 600 people shelter in the compound.
GAZA'S DEATH TOLL NEARS 33,000 AND HUNGER GROWS

The United Nations and partners warn that famine could occur in devastated, largely isolated northern Gaza. Humanitarian officials say deliveries by sea and air are not enough and that Israel must allow far more aid by road. Egypt has said thousands of trucks are waiting.

Israel says it places no limits on deliveries of humanitarian aid. It has blamed the U.N. and other international agencies for the failure to distribute more aid.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday that at least 32,782 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war. The ministry's count does not differentiate between civilians and fighters, but it has said that women and children make up around two-thirds of those killed.

Israel says over one-third of the dead are militants, though it has not provided evidence, and it blames Hamas for civilian casualties because the group operates in residential areas.

Amid concerns about a wider conflict in the region, Lebanese state media reported that an Israeli drone struck a car in the southern Lebanese town of Konin.

A Lebanese security official told The Associated Press that Hezbollah militant Ismail al-Zain was killed, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. Israel's military called al-Zain a "significant commander." Hezbollah confirmed the death.

Late Sunday, a Palestinian attacker stabbed three people in southern Israel, seriously wounding them, said the Hatzalah rescue service. Police said the attacker was shot, but gave no further details on his condition.

Gunmen in Ecuador kill 9, injure 10 others in attack in coastal city of Guayaquil as violence surges

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Gunmen attacked a group of people in Ecuador's coastal city of Guayaquil killing nine and injuring 10 others, police said Sunday, the latest in a string of violent incidents in the South American country.

The attack took place around 7 p.m. local time Saturday in the southern neighborhood of Guasmo. According to police, the armed group entered a pedestrian street in a grey Chevrolet Spark, where a group of people were practicing sports. The gunmen got out of the vehicle and proceeded to shoot people.

"So far, the result is nine people dead and 10 injured," police Col. Ramiro Arequipa told journalists around midday on Sunday.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

It was the second mass killing in as many days. On Friday, five people who had been kidnapped were killed execution style in the coastal province of Manabi by an armed gang. Police said there were signs the victims were tourists mistakenly caught up in a local drug-trafficking dispute. They didn't elaborate.

In that incident, an armed group had kidnapped a total of 11 people. Police said the other six, including five minors, were rescued and handed over to their families. Two suspects were arrested on Saturday morning, according to police.

The killings in Manabi "remind us that the battle continues," said Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa on the social media network X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday.

"Narcoterrorism and its allies are looking for spaces to scare us, but they will not succeed," Noboa said. His post contained a video of a man handcuffed and bent over, being led away forcefully by an armed police officer.

Ecuador was once considered a bastion of peace in Latin America, but in recent years has seen a surge in violent attacks.

Noboa declared a state of emergency in January, which provides for permanent operations by a security force made up of police and military. In addition, a five-hour curfew is in force in high-incidence areas such as Guayaquil.

On March 24, the 27-year-old mayor of a small town — also in the province of Manabi — was killed along

with her collaborator. Brigitte Garcia and Jairo Loor were found inside a vehicle with gunshot wounds.

On Thursday, a riot in a Guayaquil prison under military and police control left three inmates dead and four injured.

Ecuador surpassed a rate of 40 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants at the end of 2023, one of the highest in the region, according to police.

The pioneer of America's embattled global HIV program recalls the hope after years of despair

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Through his office window at what was then one of Africa's few modern clinics dealing with HIV and AIDS, the man who now oversees the United States' threatened global AIDS effort used to hear the sound of taxis pulling up throughout the day.

If he turned his head to look out the window, Dr. John Nkengasong said, he knew what he would see: another desperate family carrying a dying loved one — a man or woman already lapsing into a coma, a stick-thin child — and hoping to find help.

It was before the Bush administration started the U.S. President's Emergency Relief Plan for AIDS Relief, known as PEPFAR, in 2004. There was almost no affordable effective treatment anywhere between South Africa and the Sahara, no rapid HIV tests or high-quality government labs, and few beds for AIDS patients.

Nkengasong has spent decades working in Africa on HIV and AIDS, a career intertwined with the U.S. program that since its introduction 20 years ago has transformed care in some of the hardest-hit countries and saved an estimated 25 million lives. He spoke to The Associated Press during a battle over funding in Congress that imperils the AIDS program's future.

Opponents say the HIV/AIDS funding could be indirectly supporting abortion abroad, although the Biden administration and PEPFAR's defenders say there is no evidence that it does. After a handful of conservative lawmakers threatened for months to block the funding unless restrictions were attached, a compromise was struck in late March that extends the funding for a year.

But advocates of the program warn that without the full five-year renewal, its future remains in doubt as the political debate over abortion and reproductive rights only becomes more combative.

Before PEPFAR, in most cases, Nkengasong's infectious disease clinic in Abidjan, in the Ivory Coast, could offer the families no care. In their loved ones' last hours, the families who came there often were left to crouch outside, in the parking lot.

They would surround "a skeleton of a human being, with a tinge of flesh over their bodies," Nkengasong recalled. "They held their loved ones, giving them the best comfort they could."

Soon enough, the sound of wailing would rise through his windows. The cries signaled another death to HIV/AIDS, one of millions in Africa by the mid-2000s.

The scene would be repeated "nearly hour by hour," Nkengasong said. Sometimes he would get up and close the curtains, blocking out the misery of an epidemic he could not then stem.

Two decades later, Nkengasong says, his trips to the region from his offices in Washington bring joyous meetings with men, women and children whose lives were saved through PEPFAR, credited as the biggest government effort ever against a single disease.

In all, the U.S. program has spent more than \$110 billion on HIV care and treatment, local medical systems and social programs aimed at stemming infection. The U.S. says it has saved 25 million lives in sub-Saharan Africa and other vulnerable regions, including those of 5.5 million children.

'A THRIVING INDUSTRY OF COFFINS'

Nkengasong, who was born in Cameroon and did his graduate studies in Belgium, worked in Africa in the 1990s, when the AIDS epidemic was raging all but unchecked.

It made for a "thriving industry of coffins," he said. Visiting cities in Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and elsewhere for his work on infectious diseases, he would travel streets lined by handmade coffins of all sizes.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 31 of 51

Beds of infectious-disease clinics were full of “adults lying there looking like babies, because of what HIV had done. That ugly face,” Nkengasong recalled.

With early retroviral medication averaging \$10,000 per patient per year, only 50,000 HIV-infected people in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated to be receiving effective treatment in the mid-to-late 1990s. That was out of what the World Health Organization said was 10 million people there living with HIV and AIDS.

THE ‘AHA’ MOMENT

One day in spring 2002, as he was in his lab conducting tests, a large American delegation suddenly arrived at the clinic in Abidjan.

Health Secretary Tommy Thompson and other leading U.S. health officials crowded into the facility, along with representatives of businesses and members of faith-based organizations.

“I remember opening the door and the first person who walked through was Dr. Fauci,” Nkengasong recounted. Anthony Fauci, a leading HIV researcher, was then a top official at the U.S. National Institutes of Health and a leader in Nkengasong’s field of HIV and AIDS work. “And he said, ‘John, good to see you again.’ And I was so excited.”

Unbeknownst to Nkengasong and his colleagues, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and other officials privately had been making the case to President George W. Bush that the global HIV epidemic was where the U.S. could make a huge difference.

For the Bush administration, the epidemic presented an opportunity to do good at a time when the U.S. was waging war in Afghanistan and later Iraq as well after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

Nine months after the Americans showed up in his lab, “we’re watching news on CNN, it was the State of the Union address,” Nkengason recalled. “And President Bush announced the start of PEPFAR.”

That night, the president pledged an initial \$15 billion over the next five years to tackle the AIDS epidemic around the world.

Nkengason called it the “aha moment” for himself and others fighting AIDS in the most vulnerable region of the world.

Two decades later, AIDS deaths globally have fallen nearly 70% from their peak in 2004. Sub-Saharan Africa is still the most vulnerable region and home to two-thirds of the people living with HIV. But the PEPFAR program and others have strengthened health care systems to deal with infectious diseases, made treatment available to millions, and expanded support for the most at-risk populations, including women.

On a trip back to Abidjan, Nkengasong met a healthy 17-year-old girl, one of millions spared from infection at birth thanks to medical treatment that prevented HIV transmission from their infected mothers.

This past summer, he visited a clinic in Namibia where HIV-infected mothers had delivered “super healthy” babies thanks to treatment that saved them from infection.

“I grabbed some of the babies and looked at them,” he said. Holding them, he wondered what would have happened to them without proper care.

“And they just give you that smile,” he said.

Trump’s immigration rhetoric makes inroads with some Democrats. That could be a concern for Biden

By WILL WEISSERT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The video shared by Donald Trump features horror movie music and footage of migrants purportedly entering the U.S. from countries including Cameroon, Afghanistan and China. Shots of men with tattoos and videos of violent crime are set against close-ups of people waving and wrapping themselves in American flags.

“They’re coming by the thousands,” Trump says in the video, posted on his social media site. “We will secure our borders. And we will restore sovereignty.”

In his speeches and online posts, Trump has ramped up anti-immigrant rhetoric, casting migrants as dangerous criminals “poisoning the blood” of America. His messaging often relies on falsehoods about migration, but it has proved attractive to many core supporters going back a decade, to when “build the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 32 of 51

wall" rang out at his campaign rallies.

President Joe Biden and his allies portray the situation as a policy dispute that Congress can fix and hits Republicans in Washington for backing away from a border security deal after facing criticism from Trump.

But in a potentially worrying sign for the Democrat, Trump's message appears to be resonating with key elements of the coalition that Biden will need to win over in November.

Roughly two-thirds of Americans now disapprove of how Biden is handling border security, including about 4 in 10 Democrats, 55% of Black adults and 73% of Hispanic adults, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in March.

A recent Pew Research Center poll found that 45% of Americans described the situation as a crisis, while another 32% said it was a major problem.

Vetress Boyce, a Chicago-based racial justice activist, was among those who expressed frustration with Biden's immigration policies and the city's approach as it tries to shelter newly arriving migrants. She argued that Democrats should focus on economic investment in Black communities, not newcomers.

"They're sending us people who are starving, the same way Blacks are starving in this country. They're sending us people who want to escape the conditions and come here for a better lifestyle when the ones here are suffering and have been suffering for over 100 years," Boyce said. "That recipe is a mixture for disaster. It's a disaster just waiting to happen."

Gracie Martinez is a 52-year-old Hispanic small business owner from Eagle Pass, Texas, the border town that Trump visited in February when he and Biden made same-day trips to the state. Martinez said she once voted for former President Barack Obama and is still a Democrat, but now backs Trump — mainly because of the border.

"It's horrible," she said. "It's tons and tons of people and they're giving them medical and money, phones," she said, complaining those who went through the legal immigration system are treated worse.

Priscilla Hesles, 55, a teacher who lives in Eagle Pass, described the current situation as "almost an overtaking" that had changed the town.

"We don't know where they're hiding. We don't know where they've infiltrated into and where are they going to come out of," said Hesles, who said she used to take an evening walk to a local church, but stopped after she was shaken by an encounter with a group of men she alleged were migrants.

The president's reelection campaign recently launched a \$30 million ad campaign targeting Latino audiences in key swing states that includes a digital ad in English and Spanish highlighting Trump's past description of Mexican immigrants as "criminals" and "rapists."

The White House has mulled a series of executive actions that could drastically tighten immigration restrictions, effectively going around Congress after it failed to pass the bipartisan deal Biden endorsed.

Trump will campaign Tuesday in Wisconsin and Michigan this week, where he is expected to criticize Biden on immigration.

The former president calls recent record-high arrests for southwest border crossings an "invasion" orchestrated by Democrats to transform America. Trump accuses Biden of allowing criminals and potential terrorists to enter the country unchecked.

Trump says migrants — many of them women and children escaping poverty and violence — are "poisoning the blood" of America with drugs and disease and claims some migrants are "not people." Experts who study extremism warn against using dehumanizing language in describing migrants.

There is no evidence that foreign governments are emptying their jails or mental asylums as Trump says. And while conservative news coverage has been dominated by several high-profile and heinous crimes allegedly committed by people in the country illegally, the latest FBI statistics show overall violent crime in the U.S. dropped again last year, continuing a downward trend after a pandemic-era spike.

Studies have also found that people living in the country illegally are far less likely than native-born Americans to have been arrested for violent, drug and property crimes.

Part of what has made the border such a salient issue is that its impact is being felt far from the border.

Trump allies, most notably Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, have used state-funded buses to send more than 100,000 migrants to Democratic-led cities like New York, Denver and Chicago, where Democrats will hold

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 33 of 51

this summer's convention. The influx has strained city budgets and left local leaders scrambling to provide emergency housing and medical care for new groups of migrants.

Local news coverage has often been negative. Viewers have seen migrants blamed for everything from a string of gang-related New Jersey robberies to burglary rings targeting retail stores in suburban Philadelphia to measles cases in parts of Arizona and Illinois.

To Rudy Menchaca, an Eagle Pass bar owner who also works for a company that imports Corona beer from Mexico, the problems at the border are hurting business.

Menchaca is the kind of Hispanic voter Biden is counting on to back his reelection bid. The 27-year-old said he was never a fan of Trump's rhetoric and how he portrayed Hispanics and Mexicans. But he also said he was warming to the idea of backing Trump.

"I need those soldiers to be around if I have my business," Menchaca said of Texas forces dispatched to the border. "The bad ones that come in could break in."

Americans star on an Iraqi basketball team. Its owners include forces that attacked US troops

By ABBY SEWELL and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — A pro basketball team in Iraq is owned by a paramilitary group, and some of its forces recently attacked U.S. troops. But this hostility toward Uncle Sam has its limits: The team is banking on a high-scoring American to help lead them to a championship.

Like many former U.S. college basketball players facing stiff competition for a spot in the NBA, 27-year-old Uchenna Iroegbu of Sacramento has taken his talents abroad, excelling on teams in Nigeria and Qatar. Now the 6-foot point guard is in Baghdad after signing last month with Hashed al-Shaabi — the Popular Mobilization Forces — just in time for the Iraqi Basketball Super League playoffs.

From a basketball perspective, signing Iroegbu was a no-brainer; he led Qatar's league in scoring, averaging 27 points per game. Politically, it's a little more complicated.

The U.S. has had a fraught relationship with Iraq since its invasion in 2003, which was followed by years of occupation. And that was before Iranian-backed forces within the group that owns Hashed attacked U.S. troops in the region.

Iroegbu, who has been shooting hoops since he was old enough to hold a ball, keeps his focus on basketball and avoids talking about politics. He had never even heard of Hashed before the team made him an offer.

One of three U.S. citizens on the team, Iroegbu considers this assignment to be just like any other — despite the unique security risks and political tensions in his host country.

"I'm a pretty simple guy. I go to practice, and if I'm not practicing, I'm in my room. I hang out with my teammates, play video games, read books — the same old, same old," he said during a break from practice. Nearby, a young boy walked through the aisles hawking strong Arabic coffee to the few spectators in attendance.

The Americans communicate with their Iraqi teammates using basic English, but on the court they mostly rely on hand gestures and the "language of basketball," said Iroegbu, who played in college for Stony Brook University in New York.

All of Iraq's teams are state-owned and sponsored by different wings of the government, such as the oil and interior ministries, and they receive partial funding from the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Games are broadcast on a state-run TV channel dedicated to sports.

Hashed is owned by a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed forces that joined in the fight against the Islamic State militant group in 2014 after it seized large sections of Iraq. Two years later, the Iraqi government designated them as an "independent" unit of its army.

At the time, the Hashed militias were allies of convenience with forces from a U.S.-led international coalition fighting the Islamic State. But today, some of the groups have a hostile relationship with the U.S.

Some of the militias launched multiple drone attacks against U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria in retaliation

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 34 of 51

for America's support of Israel in its war in Gaza.

The attacks came to an abrupt halt in February, however, after a drone strike killed three American soldiers stationed in Jordan near the Syrian border. The U.S. launched retaliatory strikes in Iraq, including one that killed a militia commander in the center of Baghdad.

The commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, Esmail Ghaani, made a special trip to Iraq to demand that the armed factions stop targeting U.S. forces, according to two Iraqi political officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

The coach of Hashed, Akil Najem, said those tensions have no bearing on the team or its players.

"The club is a civilian organization and we're dealing with civilian people, so it doesn't have any relationship to these politics," said Najem,

The head of the organization is Jamal Fadel, a former player on Iraq's national team. Fadel said he has high hopes for his team, which went 10-10 during the regular season. He believes the Americans will help launch the team to national and regional prominence.

"All of the Iraqi teams depend on the international players," who contribute as much as three-quarters of the team's points in a given game, he said. "We have no issue if this player is an American, that one is Jordanian or Syrian."

Just as soccer teams around the world recruit Argentinian and Brazilian talent, international basketball teams have long relied on recruiting U.S. players, including in the Middle East.

Basketball made its way to the region in the later 19th and early 20th century via American missionaries, said Danyel Reiche, a professor at Georgetown University-Qatar who studies the intersection of sports and politics in the Middle East.

Basketball wasn't the only American sport the missionaries brought over, but it found a mass following in the region, becoming nearly as popular as soccer in some areas, he said.

Americans playing in Iraq earn more than their teammates who were born there, but they're not enjoying the high-rolling lifestyle of NBA stars back home.

The Americans earn anywhere from \$5,000 to \$6,000 a month, tax-free, Fadel said, and they also receive free housing.

Iraqi teams began recruiting American basketball players soon after the last U.S. troops withdrew in 2011, eight years after an invasion that deposed former dictator Saddam Hussein. Dozens of Americans have played in Iraq since then.

Each team is allowed three non-Iraqi players, with no more than two on the court at any given time. More than 20 Americans are playing in Iraq this season.

Isaac Banks of New Orleans, a 6-foot, 7-inch forward who previously played with another Iraqi team, is another American on the Hashed squad. Since playing for East Tennessee State University, Banks has done stints as a pro in England, Georgia, Luxembourg, Ukraine and Syria.

The Iraqi players and fans are "welcoming and loving," said Banks, who doesn't dwell on political or security matters.

"I just let God handle all that," he said. "I'm from America — we have stuff going on over there all the time."

Fadel said the club looks out for the international players' security and is "ready for anything."

Well, almost. Before a recent game against the team owned by Iraq's oil ministry, the American players were nowhere to be seen.

It turned out they had all come down with food poisoning after eating out, their coach explained while puffing nervously on an electronic cigarette.

He had good reason to be anxious. Without his star Americans, the team lost 102-94.

States move to shore up voting rights protections after courts erode federal safeguards

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — An appeals court ruling that weakened a key part of the Voting Rights Act is spurring lawmakers in several states to enact state-level protections to plug gaps that the ruling opened in the landmark federal law aimed at prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.

Democratic-led states have been taking matters into their own hands because national legislation to expand voting rights remains stalled in a divided Congress. Meanwhile, Republican lawmakers in many states have tried to erode safeguards in the name of protecting election integrity amid former President Donald Trump's false claims that vote fraud cost him the 2020 election.

Legislators in Minnesota, Michigan, Maryland, New Jersey and Florida are pursuing state voting rights acts, building on ones enacted by New York in 2022 and Connecticut in 2023, as well as ones enacted earlier in Virginia, Oregon, Washington and California.

"And we know of interest from other states that are considering taking up state VRAs in the next year or so," said Michael Pernick, an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York.

In Minnesota, Democratic Rep. Emma Greenman, of Minneapolis, said she felt an urgent need to act after the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last year in an Arkansas case that voters and groups could no longer sue under Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act — only the U.S. attorney general.

Section 2 prohibits voting practices or procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, including maps that disadvantage voters of color. Lawsuits have long been brought under the section to try to ensure Black voters have adequate political representation in places with a long history of racism, including many Southern states.

The appeals court decision currently applies only to the seven states in the 8th Circuit, which stretches from Minnesota to Arkansas. Legal observers expect the case to end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"As with other areas of policy, what you're seeing is, states really have to say, 'We need to make sure that ... we have a system that is free from discrimination, we need to protect the rights of voters,'" Greenman said.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act is seen as a crowning achievement of the civil rights movement. But federal courts have "chipped away" at it over the decades, said Lata Nott, an attorney with the Campaign Legal Center in Washington, D.C., who testified for the Minnesota bill.

The biggest blow to the federal law in the view of voting rights advocates was a 2013 Supreme Court ruling in an Alabama case that stripped the government of a potent tool to stop voting bias by eliminating the requirement that jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination in voting get "preclearance" from the federal government for major changes in the way they hold elections.

Conservatives have argued the requirement did not account for racial progress and other changes in society and that existing voting rights protections are adequate.

"It looks like this an effort by the Left in the state to do at the state level what they can't do at the federal level under the VRA," said Zack Smith, a legal fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation's Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies.

The 8th Circuit decision sounded new alarms because most lawsuits to enforce the act have come from private individuals and groups, not the Justice Department, Nott said. Administrations change, so allowing people to protect their own voting rights is a "valuable enforcement mechanism," she said.

There are broad similarities among the various state voting rights acts under consideration and the New York and Connecticut laws. They all give voters and groups a "private right of action" to challenge laws that dilute or suppress the votes of people of color, Pernick said. That's the right the 8th Circuit struck down on the federal level.

Some of the state proposals also include preclearance requirements for changes in voting to make sure they don't harm voters of color.

The Minnesota proposal is expected to get floor votes soon as part of a broader election policy bill, and

the sponsors said they are cautiously optimistic about passage. The Maryland proposal has had hearings, while an effort in Michigan is expected to get hearings in April, Nott said.

Several state proposals include "safe harbor" provisions to try to head off the kind of lengthy, expensive litigation that often has been needed to enforce the federal law. The Minnesota bill, for example, would require potential plaintiffs to notify political subdivisions before they sue to create opportunities to negotiate remedies first.

Minnesota has an image as progressive on voting rights, and the current Legislature is the most diverse in state history. But witnesses who testified before the Legislature recently said there are still problems.

They point to data showing county boards across the state, which make important decisions affecting communities of color, are disproportionately white. Electing local bodies by districts that minority candidates could win, instead of at-large seats, is one potential remedy for preventing vote dilution.

Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, a Democrat who is president-elect of the National Association of Secretaries of State, said he is trying to enlist as many of his fellow election officers across the country to file a friend-of-the-court brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the 8th Circuit decision if the plaintiffs in the Arkansas case appeal. But for now, he said, that ruling is the law in seven states.

"If we can no longer count on the federal Voting Rights Act to allow private citizens to protect their own voting rights, then we need a Minnesota Voting Rights Act to fill the gap," Simon testified. "And that's what this bill does. It fills the gap by guaranteeing a day in court for Minnesota voters to defend their voting rights against laws or policies that they believe discriminate against them."

Officials with groups representing Minnesota's local governments testified they support the concept but were concerned about the potential extra costs it could impose on them, an issue that raised concerns among Republicans on the committees that have heard the bill. Republicans also argued it's a heavier-handed tool than Minnesota needs.

Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said he had not studied the proposal in detail, but he shares the ideals of making voting easy and accessible.

"If this is moving down those paths, that's a good thing," Walz said.

Minnesota Senate President Bobby Joe Champion, a Minneapolis Democrat, is the lead author of the Minnesota Voting Rights Act in the Senate.

"Our democracy is important. We want more people voting, not less. We want more people's voice to be heard, not silenced. We want people's rights to be protected, not squandered," Champion said.

N.C. State and its 2 DJs headed to 1st Final Four since 1983 after 76-64 win over Duke

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Bruising big man DJ Burns Jr. plays with plenty of joy, skipping on and off the floor and interacting with North Carolina State fans that he often works into a frenzy with slick moves and a soft-touch shot.

"I was raised in a happy environment," Burns said. "I try to take that with me everywhere I go."

Now he can take that to the desert for the Wolfpack's first Final Four in four decades.

The 6-foot-9, 275-pound Burns scored a season-high 29 points on 13-of-19 shooting, DJ Horne had 20 and 11th-seeded N.C. State beat Atlantic Coast Conference rival Duke 76-64 in the South Region final Sunday.

N.C. State is back on basketball's biggest stage for the first time since the late Jim Valvano was sprinting around the court looking for someone to hug after winning the 1983 national title with an upset over Houston and Phi Slama Jama.

"These guys are so special," seventh-year coach Kevin Keatts said. "Nine elimination games or you go home."

These Wolfpack (26-14) head to Glendale, Arizona, with the most losses ever for a Final Four team, but on a winning streak that began after losing their last four regular-season games, and seven of nine. They

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 37 of 51

had to win five games against past national champions in five days in the ACC Tournament, including a win over Duke in the quarterfinal round, just to get into the 68-team NCAA Tournament field.

Now they will play 7-foot-4 All-American Zach Edey and Purdue in the first national semifinal game, before defending champion UConn takes on Alabama.

"I'll say like I've been saying the whole tournament. When I stop having fun with basketball, I'll stop playing," said Burns, who was voted the South Region's most outstanding player. "There's just been a total switch in our commitment. Nobody's being late to things. Nobody's being a problem on the court. Everybody's come together."

Fourth-seeded Duke (27-9), which ousted top seed Houston in the Sweet 16 two nights earlier, missed out on its second Final Four in three seasons after leading by six at halftime and maintaining that margin with 16 1/2 minutes left.

But soon after Keatts was called for a technical foul with 8 minutes left, his team was well on its way to becoming the seventh double-digit seed to make the Final Four since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985.

Jared McCain made both free throws for the technical that Keatts got after officials ruled a missed shot by Duke's Kyle Filipowski that went over the backboard and off the shot clock went off one of his players. Replays showed that while maybe there should have been a foul since Burns made contact with the 7-foot Filipowski's arm, the Wolfpack forward's wasn't even close to the ball.

A minute later, Ben Middlebrooks had a steal that led to a fast-break 3-pointer by Michael O'Connell. There was a foul called while the ball was in the air, so the Wolfpack got the trey, kept possession and Burns made another nifty basket for a 53-42 lead.

O'Connell had six points, also finishing with 11 rebounds and six assists.

McCain led Duke with 32 points, the freshman guard hitting 8 of 20 shots and making all 11 of his free throws. Jeremy Roach had 13 points while sophomore center Filipowski had 11 points and nine rebounds before fouling out with 4:52 left and the Blue Devils already down eight.

"Just give credit to State. They're on a hell of a run right now," Roach said. "We weren't us today."

None of the double-digit seeds have even made it to the national championship game, but Wolfpack fans chanted "Why not us, why not us?" before their team cut down the nets in Big D — about 1,200 miles from Tobacco Road where the N.C. State and Duke campuses are only about a half-hour drive from each other.

During the game's first media timeout, they even got to watch on the big video boards in the arena as the N.C. State women dribbled out the final 26 seconds of their regional final victory over Texas to also advance to the Final Four.

Burns, who had only four points in the regional semifinal against Marquette, hit short jumpers on the Wolfpack's first two shots of the game. But those were their only consecutive makes before halftime while shooting 26.5% (9 of 34) and trailing 27-21.

They certainly turned that around with a 55-point second half in which they made 19 of 26 shots (73.1%). Burns, who had eight points in the game's first nine minutes before his second foul, went 9 of 11 after halftime.

Duke made only 19 field goals the entire game, shooting a season-worst 32.2% on its 59 attempts. The Blue Devils became the sixth consecutive opponent held under 40% shooting by N.C. State.

"We never had any rhythm on offense," second-year Duke coach Jon Scheyer said. "They started to score more and our offense, it was probably the most disjointed game that we've played all year."

NO TITLE THIS TIME

Duke had held its first three March Madness opponents to fewer than 60 points. The only other times the Blue Devils had three-game streaks like that in tourney were in 2010 and 2015 — their last two national championships. Scheyer was part of both of those, first as a player and then an assistant coach under Mike Krzyzewski.

ALL-SOUTH REGION

Joining Burns on the all-region team were Horne, Filipowski, McCain and Marquette's Tyler Kolek.

Women's NCAA Tournament games in Portland played on court with mismatched 3-point lines

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The 3-point line for the women's NCAA Tournament at Moda Center had a discrepancy in distance at each end of the court that went unnoticed through four games over two days before Texas and North Carolina State were informed of the problem ahead of their Elite Eight matchup on Sunday.

The teams' coaches agreed to play Sunday's game as scheduled with the mismatched 3-point lines rather than delay it, the NCAA said in a statement. N.C. State beat Texas 76-66 to advance to the Final Four.

"The NCAA was notified (Sunday) that the 3-point lines on the court at Moda Center in Portland are not the same distance. The NCAA staff and women's basketball committee members on site consulted with the two head coaches who were made aware of the discrepancy. All parties elected to play a complete game on the court as is, rather than correcting the court and delaying the game," Lynn Holzman, the NCAA's vice president of women's basketball, said in a statement.

Holzman said all lines would be measured after practices concluded on Sunday evening and the correct markings would be on the floor ahead of Monday's game between Southern California and UConn.

"While the NCAA's vendor has apologized for the error, we will investigate how this happened in the first place. The NCAA is working now to ensure the accuracy of all court markings for future games," Holzman said. "We are not aware of any other issues at any of the prior sites for men's or women's tournament games."

Connor Sports makes the March Madness floors for both men and women.

"We apologize for the error that was found and have technicians on site at the Moda Center in Portland who were instructed to make the necessary corrections immediately following (Sunday's) game," the company said in a statement.

The court issue was another distraction for the NCAA during a women's tournament in which the play has been exceptional but other issues have taken the spotlight.

There was a referee pulled out of a game at halftime in the first round. Utah faced racist harassment before its first-round game. Notre Dame's Hannah Hidalgo was forced to remove a nose ring and missed time in a Sweet 16 loss to Oregon State. LSU coach Kim Mulkey threatened to sue The Washington Post over a then-unpublished profile of her and later called out a Los Angeles Times columnist for what she said was sexist criticism of her team. The Times edited the column in response.

And now, the court issue in Portland.

"I hate to say this, but I have a lot of colleagues that would say, 'Only in women's basketball,'" Texas coach Vic Schaefer said. "I mean, it's a shame, really, that it even happened. But it is what it is."

Four Sweet 16 games on Friday and Saturday were played without any of the participating teams saying anything publicly about a problem with the court.

During pregame warmups, Schaefer and N.C. State coach Wes Moore were informed that the 3-point line distance at the top of the key was different on both ends of the floor. The distance between the top of the key and the 3-point line was too short at the end in front of the N.C. State bench, while the line at the Texas end was correct, Moore said.

NCAA officials were asked to measure the distance and brought out a tape measure about 15 minutes before tip-off. After discussions between NCAA representatives, the coaches and officials, the game went on as scheduled.

A delay would have taken at least an hour, both coaches said, because someone from the outside would have to be brought in to remark the floor and could have forced the game to be bumped from being broadcast on ABC.

"That's a big deal to be on ABC," Moore said. "We've been fortunate to be on it a couple of times the last couple of years. But it's a big deal."

Both coaches said their players were not aware of the discrepancy, and N.C. State's Aziaha James in

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 39 of 51

particular had no trouble, making a career-high seven 3s on nine attempts. The NCAA said the court would be corrected before Monday's Elite Eight matchup between Southern California and UConn.

"At the end of the day we had already played a game on it and we both won, so we just decided to play," Schaefer said.

While the NCAA did not provide details, one 3-point line near the top of the key appeared to be about 6 inches closer to the basket than at the opposite end of the floor. The NCAA 3-point line is at 22 feet, 1 3/4 inches for both women and men.

The numbers showed that players struggled with the line that was too close to the basket.

Through five games, teams shooting on the end with the closer 3-point arc were 25.8% (23 of 89) on 3s. At the end of the floor that was correct, teams shot 33.3% (29 of 87).

"These kids, they shoot so far behind it sometimes nowadays, who knows where the line is?" Moore said. "It is an unusual situation. But, like I said, I don't know that it was an advantage or disadvantage, either way."

Baylor coach Nicki Collen, whose team lost to USC in the Sweet 16, posted on social media that with eight teams at one site, the focus was on game plan, not what the court looked like.

Baylor was 6 of 14 on 3-pointers in the second half while shooting at the end of the floor with the correct arc.

"Guess that's why we shot it better in the 2nd half," Collen posted.

Pope overcomes health concerns to preside over Easter Mass and appeal for peace in Gaza and Ukraine

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis rallied from a winter-long bout of respiratory problems to lead some 60,000 people in Easter celebrations Sunday, making a strong appeal for a cease-fire in Gaza and a prisoner swap between Russia and Ukraine.

Francis presided over Easter Sunday Mass in a flower-decked St. Peter's Square and then delivered a heartfelt prayer for peace in his annual roundup of global crises. Gaza's people, including the small Christian community there, have been a source of constant concern for Francis and Easter in the Holy Land overall was a somber affair this year given the war.

"Peace is never made with weapons, but with outstretched hands and open hearts," Francis said from the loggia overlooking the square, to applause from the wind-swept crowd below.

Francis appeared in good form, despite having celebrated the 2½-hour nighttime Easter Vigil just hours before. The pontiff, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been battling respiratory problems all winter and his full participation in Easter services was not entirely guaranteed, especially after he skipped the traditional Good Friday procession.

But in a sign the 87-year-old pontiff was feeling OK, he made several loops around the piazza in his popemobile after Mass, greeting well-wishers.

The Vatican said some 60,000 people attended the Mass, with more packing the Via della Conciliazione boulevard leading to the piazza. At the start of the service, a gust of wind knocked over a large religious icon on the altar just a few feet from the pope; ushers quickly righted it.

Easter Mass is one of the most important dates on the liturgical calendar, celebrating what the faithful believe was Jesus' resurrection after his crucifixion. The Mass precedes the "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) blessing, in which the pope traditionally offers a laundry list of the threats afflicting humanity.

This year, Francis said his thoughts went particularly to people in Ukraine and Gaza and all those facing war, particularly the children who he said had "forgotten how to smile."

"In calling for respect for the principles of international law, I express my hope for a general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine: all for the sake of all!" he said.

He called for the "prompt" release of prisoners taken from Israel on Oct. 7, an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and for humanitarian access to reach Palestinians.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 40 of 51

"Let us not allow the current hostilities to continue to have grave repercussions on the civil population, by now at the limit of its endurance, and above all on the children," he said in a speech that also touched on the plight of Haitians, the Rohingya and victims of human trafficking.

For the past few weeks, Francis has generally avoided delivering long speeches to avoid the strain on his breathing. He ditched his Palm Sunday homily last week and decided at the last minute to stay home from the Good Friday procession at the Colosseum.

The Vatican said in a brief explanation that the decision was made to "conserve his health."

The decision clearly paid off, as Francis was able to recite the prayers of the lengthy Saturday night Easter Vigil service, including administering the sacraments of baptism and First Communion to eight new Catholics, and preside over Easter Sunday Mass and deliver his speech.

KING CHARLES GREETES CROWDS IN WINDSOR

Francis wasn't the only leader whose mere presence at Easter offered a reassuring sign of stability and normalcy.

In Britain, King Charles III joined the queen and other members of the royal family for an Easter service at Windsor Castle in his most significant public outing since he was diagnosed with cancer last month.

The monarch offered a cheery wave to spectators as he walked into St. George's Chapel, and then spent time shaking hands and greeting well-wishers after the service. "You're very brave to stand out here in the cold," Charles told them.

SUBDUED CELEBRATIONS IN JERUSALEM

But things were hardly normal in Jerusalem, where Easter Mass came and went at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Only a few dozen faithful attended the service as the Israel-Hamas war rages on in Gaza.

The medieval church in the Old City is the holy site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.

In years past, the church has been packed with worshippers and tourists. But the bloody conflict in Gaza, now into its sixth month, has seen a huge downturn in tourism and pilgrimages across Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The streets of the old city were also absent of Palestinian Christians from the West Bank, who normally flock to the city for Easter. Since the conflict erupted, Palestinian worshippers from the Israeli-occupied territory have needed special permission to cross checkpoints into Jerusalem.

GAZA WAR CASTS A LONG SHADOW

In Gaza, the situation was even more bleak. Only a few dozen Palestinian Christians celebrated Easter Mass at the Holy Family Church in Gaza City, but there wasn't much to celebrate.

"This doesn't feel like Easter, like other times," said Winnie Tarazi, a Christian from Gaza City. "It's because we are here deprived of our homes, our belongings, our children, and everything. We lost our family between those who fled, who stayed, and who were destroyed."

The sentiment was similar in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, the traditional birthplace of Jesus, where only a few dozen people attended Mass at the Church of the Nativity.

"There is no holiday atmosphere and there is no joyful atmosphere this year," said Bethlehem resident George Kanawati. "The holidays lack joy and the smile of children, which the occupation always tries to erase and kill this smile."

The plight of Gaza was also a concern in New York, where police arrested three people who disrupted the Easter Vigil Mass at Manhattan's St. Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday. They held up a banner reading "Silence = Death" on the altar and yelled "Free Palestine" as they were escorted out, police said.

IRAQI CHRISTIANS DETERMINED TO REMAIN

But in Iraq's Nineveh Plains, where 10 years ago the Islamic State group killed and displaced thousands of minority Iraqis, hundreds of people celebrated Easter in a region that has had a Christian presence since around the time of Jesus. Iraq's Christian community, which was once some 1.5 million strong, now numbers at most a few hundred thousand but they came out in droves for Easter.

"We will definitely stick to this land and remain here until the last, and hope for a change," said Nassar Mubarak, who attended Easter Mass at the Immaculate Conception church in Qaraqosh.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 41 of 51

US military says it destroyed Houthi drones over the Red Sea and in Yemen

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The U.S. military said Sunday its forces destroyed one unmanned aerial vehicle in a Houthi rebel-held area of war-ravaged Yemen and another over a crucial shipping route in the Red Sea. It was the latest development in months of tension between the Iran-backed rebels and the U.S.

The drones, which were destroyed Saturday morning, posed a threat to U.S. and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region, said the U.S. Central Command.

It said that one drone was destroyed over the Red Sea, while the second was destroyed on the ground as it was prepared to launch.

"These actions are necessary to protect our forces, ensure freedom of navigation, and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels," CENTCOM said.

There was no comment from the Houthi rebels, which control much of Yemen's north and west.

The rebels launched a campaign of drone and missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea in November. They have also fired missiles toward Israel, although those have largely fallen short or been intercepted.

The rebels have described their campaign as an effort to pressure Israel to end its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The ships targeted by the Houthis, however, largely have had little or no connection to Israel, the U.S. or other nations involved in the war.

The Houthis have kept up their campaign of attacks despite more than two months of U.S.-led airstrikes.

Earlier this month, CENTCOM said its forces also destroyed four unmanned aerial vehicles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. It also said Houthis fired four anti-ship ballistic missiles toward the Red Sea, but no injuries or damages were reported by U.S., coalition or commercial ships.

The escalation in the Red Sea and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza impacted the U.N.-led efforts to relaunch political talks to end Yemen's yearslong conflict, according to the U.N. envoy for Yemen.

Hans Grundberg told the U.N. Security Council in mid-March that he had hoped to reach an agreement on a nationwide cease-fire in Yemen by the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began early in March.

He warned that Yemen could be propelled back into war, saying that "the longer the escalatory environment (in the region) continues, the more challenging Yemen's mediation space will become."

The war between the Houthis and pro-government forces backed by a coalition of Gulf Arab states has raged since 2014, when the Houthis swept down from the mountains, seized much of northern Yemen and the country's capital, Sanaa, and forced the internationally recognized government to flee into exile to Saudi Arabia.

Since then, more than 150,000 people have been killed by the violence and 3 million have been displaced.

Fighting has decreased markedly in Yemen since a truce in April 2022, but there are still hotspots in the country.

Crews at Baltimore bridge collapse continue meticulous work of removing twisted steel and concrete

By MIKE PESOLI and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — As divers assisted crews with the complicated and meticulous operation of removing the steel and concrete from the fallen Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, some near the site took time on Easter Sunday to reflect on the six workers presumed to have plunged to their deaths.

As cranes periodically swung into place and workers measured and cut the steel to prepare to lift sections of twisted steel, Rev. Ako Walker held a Mass in Spanish at Sacred Heart of Jesus, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) up the Patapsco River from the collapse.

"Yes we can rebuild a bridge, but we have to look at the way in which migrant workers are treated and how best we can improve their situation as they come to the United States of America," Walker said of the men who were from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and were patching potholes.

Dive teams were in the river Sunday surveying parts of the bridge underwater and checking on the ship

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 42 of 51

to ensure it can be safely floated away once the wreckage is lifted. Workers in lifts used torches earlier to cut parts of the twisted steel superstructure above water.

The bridge fell early Tuesday as the crew of the cargo ship Dali lost power and control. They called in a mayday, which allowed just enough time for police to stop vehicles from getting on the bridge, but not enough time to get a crew of eight workers off the structure.

Two workers survived, two bodies were found in a submerged pickup and four more men are presumed dead. Weather conditions and the tangled debris underwater have made it too dangerous for divers to search for their bodies.

Each part of the bridge removed from the water will be lifted onto a barge and floated downstream to the Tradepoint Atlantic logistics center, where it will be inspected, Coast Guard Rear Adm. Shannon Gilreath said.

Everything the salvage crews do affects what happens next and ultimately how long it will take to remove all the debris and reopen the ship channel and the blocked Port of Baltimore, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said.

It can also alter the course of the National Transportation Safety Board investigation, which Moore said is important to ensure this doesn't happen again.

"We need to have answers on what happened. We need to know who should be accountable for this. And we need to make sure we're holding them accountable," Moore said Sunday on CNN.

The crew of the Dali, which is as long as the Eiffel Tower is tall, remains onboard the ship. The vessel is tangled in 3,000 to 4,000 tons of debris. Most of its containers remain intact, but some were torn open or knocked away by the falling debris.

The Dali is managed by Synergy Marine Group and owned by Grace Ocean Private Ltd. Danish shipping giant Maersk chartered Dali, which was on its way out of port when it hit the bridge's support column.

Along with clearing the shipping channel to reopen the port, officials are trying to figure out how to rebuild the major bridge, which was completed in 1977 and carried Interstate 695 around southeast Baltimore and was a vital link to the city's centuries of maritime culture.

It took five years to build the original bridge. President Joe Biden's administration has promised to pay the full cost to rebuild and state and federal transportation officials said they will work as quickly as possible.

But exactly how long the new bridge will take can't be figured out now. Engineers haven't been able to assess the condition of the ramps and smaller bridges leading to the collapsed structure to get the full scope of what must be done.

Congress is expected to consider aid packages to help people who lose jobs or businesses because of the prolonged closure of the Port of Baltimore. The port handles more cars and farm equipment than any other U.S. facility.

"This matters to folks in rural North Carolina, in Kansas, and Iowa. This matters to the global economy. And it should not be something that has anything or any conversation around party. We are talking about an American tragedy to an American city," Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday.

On Monday the Small Business Administration will open a center in Dundalk, Maryland, to help small businesses get loans to help them with losses caused by the disruption of the bridge collapse.

The workers weren't parishioners at Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose pews were packed Sunday for mass. But its pastor, Walker, reached out to the families because as he said the Latino community in Baltimore is large in number but closely connected.

He said in an interview before mass that they were good men working not just for their families in the U.S. but also for relatives in their countries.

Walker hopes their stories encourage people to embrace migrant workers who want to improve their lives and grow their communities.

"We have to be bridges for one another even in this most difficult situations. Our lives must be small bridges of mercy of hope of togetherness and of building communities," Walker said.

AT&T says a data breach leaked millions of customers' information online. Were you affected?

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Reporter

NEW YORK (AP) — The theft of sensitive information belonging to millions of AT&T's current and former customers has been recently discovered online, the telecommunications giant said this weekend.

In a Saturday announcement addressing the data breach, AT&T said that a dataset found on the "dark web" contains information including some Social Security numbers and passcodes for about 7.6 million current account holders and 65.4 million former account holders.

Whether the data "originated from AT&T or one of its vendors" is still unknown, the Dallas-based company noted — adding that it had launched an investigation into the incident. AT&T has also begun notifying customers whose personal information was compromised.

Here's what you need to know.

WHAT INFORMATION WAS COMPROMISED IN THIS BREACH?

Although varying by each customer and account, AT&T says that information involved in this breach included Social Security numbers and passcodes — which, unlike passwords, are numerical PINS that are typically four digits long.

Full names, email addresses, mailing address, phone numbers, dates of birth and AT&T account numbers may have also been compromised. The impacted data is from 2019 or earlier and does not appear to include financial information or call history, the company said.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I WAS AFFECTED?

Consumers impacted by this breach should be receiving an email or letter directly from AT&T about the incident. The email notices began going out on Saturday, an AT&T spokesperson confirmed to The Associated Press.

WHAT ACTION HAS AT&T TAKEN?

Beyond these notifications, AT&T said that it had already reset the passcodes of current users. The company added that it would pay for credit monitoring services where applicable.

AT&T also said that it "launched a robust investigation" with internal and external cybersecurity experts to investigate the situation further.

HAS AT&T SEEN DATA BREACHES LIKE THIS BEFORE?

AT&T has seen several data breaches that range in size and impact over the years.

While the company says the data in this latest breach surfaced on a hacking forum nearly two weeks ago, it closely resembles a similar breach that surfaced in 2021 but which AT&T never acknowledged, cybersecurity researcher Troy Hunt told the AP Saturday.

"If they assess this and they made the wrong call on it, and we've had a course of years pass without them being able to notify impacted customers," then it's likely the company will soon face class action lawsuits, said Hunt, founder of an Australia-based website that warns people when their personal information has been exposed.

A spokesperson for AT&T declined to comment further when asked about these similarities Sunday.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF GOING FORWARD?

Avoiding data breaches entirely can be tricky in our ever-digitized world, but consumers can take some steps to help protect themselves going forward.

The basics include creating hard-to-guess passwords and using multifactor authentication when possible. If you receive a notice about a breach, it's good idea to change your password and monitor account activity for any suspicious transactions. You'll also want to visit a company's official website for reliable contact information — as scammers sometimes try to take advantage of news like data breaches to gain your trust through look-alike phishing emails or phone calls.

In addition, the Federal Trade Commission notes that nationwide credit bureaus — such as Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — offer free credit freezes and fraud alerts that consumers can set up to help protect themselves from identity theft and other malicious activity.

Newspaper edits its column about LSU-UCLA game after Tigers coach Kim Mulkey blasted it as sexist

By PAT EATON-ROBB AP Sports Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The Los Angeles Times has edited a column it published last week about the LSU women's basketball team ahead of its game against UCLA following criticism from Tigers coach Kim Mulkey, who blasted it as sexist and hurtful.

Mulkey defended her players after they were referred to as "villains" and "dirty debutantes" in a piece first published Friday that likened the Sweet 16 game between LSU and UCLA as a battle of good versus evil.

"How dare people attack kids like that?" she said Saturday. "You don't have to like the way we play. You don't have to like the way we trash talk. You don't have to like any of that. We're good with that. But I can't sit up here as a mother and a grandmother and a leader of young people and allow somebody to say that."

The Times removed those references late Saturday as well as one comparing UCLA's team to "milk and cookies" and republished the column with a note that said: "A previous version of this commentary did not meet Times editorial standards. It has been updated."

UCLA coach Cori Close apologized on social media for retweeting the column, saying in part: "I would never want to promote anything that tears down a group of people in our great game."

Mulkey said Sunday she was only generally aware of the response to her comments a day earlier.

"I had someone say the LA Times updated, rewrote, did something, and they did it at 10:20 last night or 10 something, and I said, OK," she said. "That was the extent of it."

Mulkey's players praised her Saturday for letting them be themselves on and off the court, with Angel Reese labeling herself and her teammates as "good villains" who are changing the game and supporting each other.

Hailey Van Lith told reporters Sunday that includes when they have to deal with bigotry.

"We do have a lot of Black women on this team, and unfortunately, that bias does exist still today, and a lot of the people that are making those comments are being racist towards my teammates," said Van Lith, who is white. "I'm in a unique situation where I see with myself, I'll talk trash and I'll get a different reaction than if Angel talks trash. I have a duty to my teammates to have their back. Some of the words that were used in that article were very sad and upsetting."

Mulkey reiterated Sunday that she would not read another newspaper article over which she threatened to file a defamation lawsuit.

She was the subject of a profile published Saturday in The Washington Post in which family members and former players are quoted about her personality and how she runs her basketball program.

Mulkey's father and sister are quoted as saying they have not talked to Mulkey in years while others suggest she was uncomfortable at best with the LGBTQ+ community, including some of her own players.

"The lawyers will review it, and when this season is over, they'll give me a call and say, this is our next step," Mulkey said Sunday. "I'm not reading that stuff."

Days before the story was published, Mulkey threatened to sue the newspaper for what she said would be a "hit piece." Instead, it was a wide-ranging profile that examined both positive and negative aspects of her life.

After her team beat UCLA 78-69 on Saturday, she responded with false surprise when a reporter told her the article had come out an hour before the game started. (She had been asked about it on ESPN before tipoff.)

"Imagine that," she said. "Must have thought y'all would look at it, get some clicks or be a distraction. No, ma'am, I haven't read it and I probably won't read it."

The profile comes during a season when LSU opened the defense of its national title with a surprising loss to Colorado and a holiday tournament in which Reese didn't play because of unspecified "locker-room issues" that Mulkey declined to divulge.

Reese made some general references to her mental health and not wanting her behavior to be detri-

mental to the team.

The Tigers bounced back to have a solid season, losing in the Southeastern Conference Tournament final to South Carolina. They entered the NCAA Tournament as a No. 3 seed and are trying to become the first back-to-back champions since UConn won its fourth straight in 2016. LSU will play Caitlin Clark and top-seeded Iowa on Monday in a rematch of last year's national title game.

Kia recalls over 427,000 Telluride SUVs because they might roll away while parked

NEW YORK (AP) — Kia is recalling more than 427,000 of its Telluride SUVs due to a defect that may cause the cars to roll away while they're parked.

According to documents published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the intermediate shaft and right front driveshaft of certain 2020-2024 Tellurides may not be fully engaged. Over time, this can lead to "unintended vehicle movement" while the cars are in park — increasing potential crash risks.

Kia America decided to recall all 2020-2023 model year and select 2024 model year Tellurides earlier this month, NHTSA documents show. At the time, no injuries or crashes were reported.

Improper assembly is suspected to be the cause of the shaft engagement problem — with the recall covering 2020-2024 Tellurides that were manufactured between Jan. 9, 2019 and Oct. 19, 2023. Kia America estimates that 1% have the defect.

To remedy this issue, recall documents say, dealers will update the affected cars' electronic parking brake software and replace any damaged intermediate shafts for free. Owners who already incurred repair expenses will also be reimbursed.

In the meantime, drivers of the impacted Tellurides are instructed to manually engage the emergency break before exiting the vehicle. Drivers can also confirm if their specific vehicle is included in this recall and find more information using the NHTSA site and/or Kia's recall lookup platform.

Owner notification letters are otherwise set to be mailed out on May 15, with dealer notification beginning a few days prior.

The Associated Press reached out to Irvine, California-based Kia America for further comment Sunday.

New \$20 minimum wage for fast food workers in California set to start Monday

By TERRY CHEA and ADAM BEAM Associated Press

LIVERMORE, Calif. (AP) — Most fast food workers in California will be paid at least \$20 an hour beginning Monday when a new law is scheduled to kick in giving more financial security to an historically low-paying profession while threatening to raise prices in a state already known for its high cost of living.

Democrats in the state Legislature passed the law last year in part as an acknowledgement that many of the more than 500,000 people who work in fast food restaurants are not teenagers earning some spending money, but adults working to support their families.

That includes immigrants like Ingrid Vilorio, who said she started working at a McDonald's shortly after arriving in the United States in 2019. Fast food was her full-time job until last year. Now, she works about eight hours per week at a Jack in the Box while working other jobs.

"The \$20 raise is great. I wish this would have come sooner," Vilorio said through a translator. "Because I would not have been looking for so many other jobs in different places."

The law was supported by the trade association representing fast food franchise owners. But since it passed, many franchise owners have bemoaned the impact the law is having on them, especially during California's slowing economy.

Alex Johnson owns 10 Auntie Anne's Pretzels and Cinnabon restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area. He said sales have slowed in 2024, prompting him to lay off his office staff and rely on his parents to help with payroll and human resources.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 46 of 51

Increasing his employees' wages will cost Johnson about \$470,000 each year. He will have to raise prices anywhere from 5% to 15% at his stores, and is no longer hiring or seeking to open new locations in California, he said.

"I try to do right by my employees. I pay them as much as I can. But this law is really hitting our operations hard," Johnson said.

"I have to consider selling and even closing my business," he said. "The profit margin has become too slim when you factor in all the other expenses that are also going up."

Over the past decade, California has doubled its minimum wage for most workers to \$16 per hour. A big concern over that time was whether the increase would cause some workers to lose their jobs as employers' expenses increased.

Instead, data showed wages went up and employment did not fall, said Michael Reich, a labor economics professor at the University of California-Berkeley.

"I was surprised at how little, or how difficult it was to find disemployment effects. If anything, we find positive employment effects," Reich said.

Plus, Reich said while the statewide minimum wage is \$16 per hour, many of the state's larger cities have their own minimum wage laws setting the rate higher than that. For many fast food restaurants, this means the jump to \$20 per hour will be smaller.

The law reflected a carefully crafted compromise between the fast food industry and labor unions, which had been fighting over wages, benefits and legal liabilities for close to two years. The law originated during private negotiations between unions and the industry, including the unusual step of signing confidentiality agreements.

The law applies to restaurants offering limited or no table service and which are part of a national chain with at least 60 establishments nationwide. Restaurants operating inside a grocery establishment are exempt, as are restaurants producing and selling bread as a stand-alone menu item.

At first, it appeared the bread exemption applied to Panera Bread restaurants. Bloomberg News reported the change would benefit Greg Flynn, a wealthy campaign donor to Newsom. But the Newsom administration said the wage increase law does apply to Panera Bread because the restaurant does not make dough on-site. Also, Flynn has announced he would pay his workers at least \$20 per hour.

2 dead as Russia launches attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian cruise missile strike on infrastructure in Ukraine's western Lviv region killed one man, while another died in an attack in the northeast, officials said Sunday.

The attack in Lviv destroyed a building and sparked a fire, Gov. Maksym Kozlytskyi wrote on social media app Telegram. He said that rescue operations were being conducted.

In the Kharkiv region, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said that an air attack killed an 19-year-old man after a missile hit a gas station.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands in Ukraine's Odesa region were left without power Sunday after debris from a downed Russian drone caused a blaze at an energy facility, Gov. Oleh Kiper said. Some 170,000 homes suffered power outages as a result of the attack, said Ukraine's largest private electricity operator, DTEK.

The Ukrainian air force said that it shot down nine of the 11 Shahed-type drones launched by Russia overnight, as well as nine out of 14 cruise missiles.

Russia has escalated its attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure in recent days, causing significant damage in several regions.

Ukrainian energy company Centrenergy announced Saturday that the Zmiiv Thermal Power Plant, one of the largest in the northeastern Kharkiv region, was completely destroyed following Russian shelling last week. Power outage schedules were still in place for around 120,000 people in the region, where 700,000 had lost electricity after the plant was hit on March 22.

In a message Sunday to mark the date when some of Ukraine's Christians celebrate Easter, President

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 47 of 51

Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the country to persevere.

"There is not a day or night right now when Russian terror does not try to shatter our lives. Last night, we once again saw rockets and Shaheds launched against our people," he said.

"We defend ourselves, we persevere; our spirit does not give up and knows that death can be averted. Life can win," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine's Catholic, Protestant, and Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter Sunday according to the Gregorian calendar. The country's religious majority, Orthodox Christians, follow the Julian calendar, which in 2024 places Easter on May 5.

Many of Ukraine's Orthodox Christians began marking Christmas in line with the Gregorian calendar on Dec. 25 in 2023, in a move adopted by some of the country's churches to distance themselves from Russia. However, the dates for Easter and other religious holidays have so far remained unchanged.

Zelenskyy, alongside Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and several ambassadors, spent the day in the town of Bucha in the Kyiv region, commemorating the second anniversary of the area's liberation from Russian forces.

Bucha's name has come to evoke savagery by Moscow's military since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. Ukrainian troops who retook the town on March 31, 2022, found the bodies of men, women and children on the streets, in yards and homes, and in mass graves. Some showed signs of torture.

The Ukrainian leader laid a lamp at the town's Wall of Remembrance, the president's website said. The monument names the 509 civilians who have so far been identified of those killed during the occupation.

In Russia, meanwhile, 10 Czech-made Vampire rockets landed in the region of Belgorod on Sunday, the Ministry of Defense said. One woman was injured when a fire broke out following the attack, said regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov. Another woman was killed as shelling hit villages along the Russian border.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed orders heralding the start of the country's annual spring recruitment season, officially drafting 150,000 conscripts.

Russia's parliament raised the upper age limit for conscripts from 27 to 30 in July 2023 in a move that appeared to be part of efforts to expand the country's military during the fighting in Ukraine. All Russian men are obliged to complete the yearlong national service, although many avoid the draft by using deferments granted to students, people with chronic illnesses and others.

Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese are a major part of the rise of women's college basketball

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese have been catalysts for the rapid rise of women's college basketball because of their play on the court that has drawn millions of new fans to the sport and their success off of it.

The pair has brought comparisons to what Magic Johnson and Larry Bird did for men's college basketball when they played for the national championship in 1979 and then in the NBA for the decade after. While Clark and Reese weren't born yet when the two NBA stars were playing, they appreciate the comparisons.

"I would say me and Angel have always been great competitors. Obviously she played in the Big Ten for a while to begin her career, and that's what makes women's basketball so fun is you have great competition, and that's what we've had all year long," Clark said of Reese, who transferred to LSU from Maryland.

They will meet in the NCAA Tournament for the second time in two seasons when Iowa faces LSU in the Albany 2 Regional Final on Monday night. Last season's national championship game drew a record 9.9 million viewers. (This Elite Eight matchup isn't expected to draw quite as many viewers because it is airing on ESPN, while the title game was on ABC.)

"I think definitely those two players have had something to do with it," Iowa coach Lisa Bluder said.

Reese said she and Clark are fine off the court and noted both are fierce competitors on it. A lot was made out of Reese trash-talking Clark after the title game. Clark was fine with it, saying then it was just

part of the game.

"I think people just take it like we hate each other. Me and Caitlin Clark don't hate each other," Reese said. "I want everybody to understand that. It's just a super competitive game."

Regardless of who wins the rematch, both star players know they've left a lasting impact off the court. "Just being able to have people say that she changed my life, she gave me inspiration, she gave me confidence, and I think I've done that in so many different ways," Reese said. "Being a great player is amazing, but being able to have little girls or even grown women come up to me just like, thank you, thank you for being who you are, thank you for speaking out on things that I'm too scared to speak out on or I don't have the platform to use, just being able to have that person."

Clark knows she's inspired countless young girls and boys to fall in love with women's basketball. "It's super special to see your impact not only in the state of Iowa but across the country," she said. "To be able to have that impact on the next generation is really special, and you just hope to dream and aspire to be like you one day and chase after all their dreams."

They also have paved the way for women's players to make huge money through their name image and likeness (NIL). The two have some of the highest valuations in the nation. Clark's is just over \$3 million while Reese is at \$1.8 million, according to On3.com.

King Charles shakes hands, chats with crowd at most significant public outing since cancer diagnosis

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III shook hands and chatted with onlookers after attending an Easter service at Windsor Castle on Sunday in his most significant public outing since being diagnosed with cancer last month.

The king, dressed in a dark overcoat and shiny blue tie, smiled as he made his way along a rope line outside St. George's Chapel for about five minutes, reaching into the crowd to greet supporters who waved get-well cards and snapped photos on a chilly early spring day. "You're very brave to stand out here in the cold," Charles told them.

"Keep going strong," one member of the crowd shouted as Charles and Queen Camilla walked by.

The 75-year-old monarch's appearance was seen as an effort to reassure the public after Charles stepped back from public duties in early February following an announcement by Buckingham Palace that he was undergoing treatment for an unspecified type of cancer.

The king has continued fulfilling his state duties, such as reviewing government papers and meeting with the prime minister. But his attendance at a traditional royal event like the Easter service is seen as a sign that he is beginning a managed return to public life. British media reported last week that Charles would slowly increase his public appearances after Easter.

The service itself was smaller than usual as Kate, the Princess of Wales, is also being treated for cancer and has paused public duties. The princess, her husband Prince William, and their children did not attend.

Kate's shock announcement that she, too, had cancer was made on March 22, after weeks of speculation about her health and whereabouts following major abdominal surgery in February.

Charles' enforced absence from public life has been a setback for a man who is eager to put his stamp on the monarchy after waiting almost 74 years — longer than any previous heir — to become king.

When he succeeded his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, Charles faced the daunting task of demonstrating that the 1,000-year-old monarchy remains relevant in a modern nation whose citizens come from all corners of the globe. After less than two years on the throne, the king is still defining himself with the public as he tries to persuade young people and members of minority communities that the royal family can represent them.

"He knows that being seen by the public and having public goodwill is really what's at the core of a successful monarchy," royal commentator Jennie Bond told the BBC. "He needs to have that interaction and

I think he quite enjoys it, actually.”

Some members of the public seemed reassured. Anne Daley, 65, from Cardiff, Wales, held up a Welsh flag to the former Prince of Wales.

“Did you see the smile (Charles) gave me? He pointed at my flag,” she said. “He had a lovely smile. He looked well. I think he was happy that we’ve all come.”

Although the duties of a constitutional monarch are largely ceremonial, the job of being a royal can be exhausting.

Besides the occasional procession in full royal regalia, there are meetings with political leaders, dedication ceremonies and events honoring the accomplishments of British citizens. That added up to 161 days of royal engagements during Charles’s first year on the throne.

The palace has worked hard to keep the king in the public eye — even as he sought to limit contacts to reduce his risk of infection while receiving treatment. Videos of the king reading get-well cards and an audience with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak were released. He also attended a session of the Privy Council, an assembly of senior advisers.

While he skipped a pre-Easter service on Thursday, Charles released a prerecorded audio message in which he expressed his regret at missing an occasion traditionally attended by the monarch.

The king also reaffirmed his coronation pledge “not to be served, but to serve.”

“That I have always tried to do and continue to do, with my whole heart,” he said.

UConn proud of Big East’s basketball pedigree even as football money upends college sports

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Alabama and the rest of the football fans in the Southeastern Conference are about to find out what Big East basketball is all about.

The Crimson Tide, who have won 18 NCAA football championships but have never been to a men’s basketball Final Four, will meet top-seeded UConn in the national semifinals on April 6. The Huskies have a chance to win back-to-back NCAA titles — which would make it six in 13 years for the Big East, the league that takes pride in its basketball pedigree even as football money upended the rest of college sports.

“The Big East is a monster,” UConn coach Dan Hurley said after the Huskies steamrolled Illinois 77-52 on Saturday night — a March Madness -record 10th straight double-digit victory for the Huskies.

“Iron sharpens iron,” Hurley said. “The league prepares us for these nonconference games. ... You’re going against beasts and monsters every night in the Big East, and the Big East prepared us for teams like Illinois.”

UConn has beaten three Big Ten teams this season, topping Indiana in the regular season and Northwestern in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The Huskies did not play an SEC team this year but went 3-0 against them last season, including an 82-67 victory over Alabama on Nov. 22, 2022.

“We’re going to be tough to beat,” said Hurley, whose team scored 30 straight points against Illinois to break open a game that was tied 23-all in the final two minutes of the first half. “It was a special level of basketball that we were playing.”

Donovan Clingan had 22 points, 10 rebounds and five blocked shots for UConn, which cruised to its fifth national title last year and seems inexorably headed for a sixth.

Their NCAA Tournament wins this year have come by 39, 17, 30 and 25 points.

Actor Bill Murray, whose son, Luke, is a Huskies assistant coach, watched the game from a courtside seat and took video of the postgame celebration, where his grandchildren were showered with confetti. “Curb Your Enthusiasm” star Larry David was also part of a heavily partisan crowd the Huskies (35-3) called “Storrs North” for the East Region games that were played about 90 miles from campus.

UConn, which won the Big East Tournament at Madison Square Garden and advanced to the Sweet 16 in Brooklyn, will now get on an airplane for the first time in almost a month and head to the Final Four

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 50 of 51

outside of Phoenix. Alabama advanced with an 89-82 victory over Clemson later Saturday night.

The Huskies, who set a school record for victories in a season, are the first defending champs to make it back to the national semifinals since Florida won back-to-back titles in 2006 and '07.

That's still a possibility for UConn, too.

"It's not about really trying to win No. 6 or go back to back," Hurley said. "It's this time of year, you love your team and you can't imagine what it would be like to not get up the next day and still coach your team. It's what you learn when you win the way we've won: It really is about the work, the journey, the process."

The Fighting Illini (29-9) managed just four points in the first half when Clingan was in the game, with the 7-foot-2 Connecticut native recording nine points, six rebounds and three blocks before the break. Overall, they were 0 for 19 on shots challenged by Clingan.

"We were getting the same shots we've always gotten, and Clingan erased a few of them," Illinois coach Brad Underwood said. "He's good. I mean, doesn't everybody have him projected in the (NBA) lottery or close to it? He does a great job of protecting the rim."

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is to undergo hernia surgery.

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office says the Israeli leader will undergo surgery on Sunday for a hernia.

Netanyahu's office said the hernia was discovered during a routine checkup, and that the prime minister will be under full anesthesia and unconscious for the procedure.

Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a close confidant who also holds the title of deputy prime minister, will serve as acting prime minister during the operation, the office said.

Netanyahu, 74, has kept a full schedule throughout Israel's nearly six-month-long war against Haqmas, and his doctors have said he is in good health.

Last year, however, doctors acknowledged he had concealed a long-known heart problem after they implanted a pacemaker.

Today in History: April 1

First pro baseball, hockey strikes begin, 20 years apart

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 1, the 92nd day of 2024. There are 274 days left in the year. This is April Fool's Day.

Today's Highlights in History:

On April 1, 1972, the first Major League Baseball players' strike began; it lasted 12 days. Twenty years later, on April 1, 1992, the National Hockey League Players' Association went on its first-ever strike, which lasted 10 days.

On this date:

In 1865, during the Civil War, Union forces routed Confederate soldiers in the Battle of Five Forks in Virginia.

In 1891, the Wrigley Co. was founded in Chicago by William Wrigley, Jr.

In 1924, Adolf Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. (Hitler was released in December 1924; during his time behind bars, he wrote his autobiographical screed, "Mein Kampf.")

In 1945, American forces launched the amphibious invasion of Okinawa during World War II. (U.S. forces succeeded in capturing the Japanese island on June 22.)

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed a measure banning cigarette advertising on radio and television, to take effect after Jan. 1, 1971.

In 1975, with Khmer Rouge guerrillas closing in, Cambodian President Lon Nol resigned and fled into exile, spending the rest of his life in the United States.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 280 ~ 51 of 51

In 1976, Apple Computer was founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne.

In 1977, the U.S. Senate followed the example of the House of Representatives by adopting, 86-9, a stringent code of ethics requiring full financial disclosure and limits on outside income.

In 2003, American troops entered a hospital in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh), Iraq, and rescued Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who had been held prisoner since her unit was ambushed on March 23.

In 2011, Afghans angry over the burning of a Quran at a small Florida church stormed a U.N. compound in northern Afghanistan, killing seven foreigners, including four Nepalese guards.

In 2013, Taylor Swift was named entertainer of the year for the second year in a row at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

In 2016, world leaders ended a nuclear security summit in Washington by declaring progress in safeguarding nuclear materials sought by terrorists and wayward nations, even as President Barack Obama acknowledged the task was far from finished.

In 2017, Bob Dylan received his Nobel Literature diploma and medal during a small gathering in Stockholm, where he was performing a concert.

In 2018, writer and producer Steven Bochco, known for creating the groundbreaking TV police drama "Hill Street Blues," died after a battle with cancer; he was 74.

In 2020, resisting calls to issue a national stay-at-home order, President Donald Trump said he wanted to give governors "flexibility" to respond to the coronavirus. Under growing pressure, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joined his counterparts in more than 30 states in issuing a stay-at-home order.

In 2022, talks to stop the fighting in Ukraine resumed, as another attempt to rescue civilians from the shattered and encircled city of Mariupol was thrown into jeopardy and Russia accused the Ukrainians of a cross-border helicopter attack on a fuel depot.

In 2023, storms that dropped dozens of tornadoes killed more than 30 people in small towns and big cities across the South and Midwest.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Don Hastings is 90. Actor Ali MacGraw is 85. R&B singer Rudolph Isley is 85. Reggae singer Jimmy Cliff is 76. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito is 74. Rock musician Billy Currie (Ultravox) is 74. Actor Annette O'Toole is 72. Movie director Barry Sonnenfeld is 71. Singer Susan Boyle is 63. Actor Jose Zuniga is 62. Country singer Woody Lee is 56. Actor Jessica Collins is 53. Rapper-actor Method Man is 53. Movie directors Albert and Allen Hughes are 52. Political commentator Rachel Maddow is 51. Former tennis player Magdalena Maleeva is 49. Actor David Oyelowo is 48. Actor JJ Feild is 46. Singer Bijou Phillips is 44. Actor Sam Huntington is 42. Comedian-actor Taran Killam is 42. Actor Matt Lanter is 41. Actor Josh Zuckerman is 39. Country singer Hillary Scott (Lady A) is 38. Rock drummer Arejay Hale (Halestorm) is 37. Actor Asa Butterfield is 27. Actor Tyler Wladis is 14.