

“All the News  
That’s Fit to Print”

# The New York Times

**THE WEATHER**  
Today, sunny, windy, very cold, an afternoon snow shower, high 35. **Tonight**, cloudy, blustery, cold, low 28. **Tomorrow**, cloudy, brisk, cold, high 36. Weather map is on Page B8.

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Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00



Two sprawling detention centers in Kurdish-controlled northeastern Syria house more than 27,000 family members of ISIS militants.

## Volatility Grows in Syrian Camps Holding Families of ISIS Fighters

**By ALISSA J. RUBIN**

AL HOL CAMP, Syria — The arid steppes of northeastern Syria stretch almost uninterrupted to the Iraqi border, the emptiness broken only by the occasional oil derrick, until the road comes to a sprawling prison camp.

A chain-link fence topped with barbed wire surrounds the vast compound, and supply trucks line the route for more than half a mile outside the camp's gates. This is Al Hol detention camp, where most detainees are family members — wives, sisters, children — of fighters for the terrorist group Islamic State, or ISIS. More than 8,000 fighters themselves are in prisons nearby.

For years, ISIS ruled large parts of Syria and neighboring Iraq, brutally enforcing its strict interpretation of Islamic law. As

### As U.S. Steps Back, It Wants Damascus to Take Over Control

Kurdish-led Syrian forces backed by the United States battled to reclaim that land, they detained thousands of ISIS fighters and tens of thousands of their relatives.

U.S. forces entrusted their Syrian Kurdish allies with guarding the ISIS detainees and families. But now, the Pentagon is drawing down its troops in Syria, and there are indications that U.S. officials want Syria's new government to take responsibility for the prisons and detention camps.

This is part of a larger govern-

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## E.P.A. Is Set to Loosen Rules On Exposure to Formaldehyde

**By HIROKO TABUCHI**

The Trump administration is proposing to almost double what's considered safe exposure levels to formaldehyde, a cancer-causing chemical found in many consumer products, as part of a broader overhaul of its approach to regulating carcinogens.

The Environmental Protection Agency under the Biden administration had, for the first time, prepared to regulate formaldehyde based on a fundamental assumption: that there is virtually no safe level of exposure for such carcinogens.

But in a win for the chemicals industry, the E.P.A. under President Trump is upending that approach. A draft memo published by the agency this month assumes a safe threshold exists for formaldehyde.

### Doubling the Limit for a Chemical Known to Cause Cancer

Regulating formaldehyde has been highly contentious because it is used in products as varied as furniture and clothes, so many different industries would be affected by any limits.

The proposed new approach, long called for by industry groups, is moving forward under the direction of two E.P.A. officials who were formerly senior directors at a leading chemicals industry group.

The change would almost double the amount of formaldehyde that is considered safe to inhale,

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## A Theater Popular Partly Because It’s Zzz-Rated

**By MAX KIM**

SEOUL — The matinee was coming to a gruesome ending on the screen, but in the seats casual conversation mixed with a salvo of ringtones, several of which resulted in long phone calls. Dozens of patrons wandered in and out of the auditorium. One man stopped in the aisle to stretch, his puffer jacket emitting loud polyester swishes with every move.

These are the rhythms of Hollywood Classic, an independent movie theater in Seoul that has a dedicated clientele.

“It’s a sanctuary for people in their 60s and older — somewhere you can just sit and pass the time,” said Kim Woo-bon, 81, who was sitting in the middle section. “Everybody knows about this place.”

For the cinephiles, it is a place to catch long-forgotten flicks on the big screen. For the nostalgia-seekers, the lobby is a well-furnished museum of life in postwar South Korea, filled with everything from vintage rice cookers to old children's textbooks. But most just come to hang out.

“A lot of people just come and sleep in their seats because they have nowhere better to be,” said Mr. Kim, a retired foreman.

### Older Patrons Take In a Film, Chat or Nap

“Then they wake up and watch for a bit and then doze off again.”

The theater's target audience is rapidly growing. Years of falling fertility rates have turned South Korea into one of the fastest-aging societies in the world. Last year, for the first time in the

country's history, citizens in their 70s outnumbered those in their 20s.

But older residents have scant options for leisure, said Hyeri Shin, a professor of gerontology at Kyung Hee University in Seoul.

“There is growing demand among older South Koreans for different forms of recreation, but their choices are still limited to simple activities like ‘resting’ or

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A Monday concert late last month at Hollywood Classic in Seoul, a two-screen movie theater that caters to an older audience.

## A Prime Target For Scam Calls, 50 Times a Day

**By NICK KEPPLER**

The calls start about 7 a.m. and continue until 6 or 7 p.m. On a recent afternoon, Steven Kurutz flipped through his phone's call log. They were coming about every 14 minutes: 10:39 a.m., 11:03, 11:06, 11:25, 11:37, 11:55, 12:06, 12:18.

When Mr. Kurutz, 80, answered, a recorded message asked about his Medicare coverage.

“My name is Laura from health care,” a chipper voice said. “We’re reaching out to seniors to ensure any unclaimed additional Medicare benefit. You have Medicare Parts A and B, right?”

This call, like most others, claimed to offer Medicare Part C, a type of private insurance, usually marketed as Medicare Advantage, that augments Part A, which covers hospitalization, and Part B, which covers outpatient services. Mr. Kurutz, who lives in South Park Township, Pa., already had the equivalent of a Part C plan. It was included in his retirement package with General Motors, which employed him as a truck repairman for 32 years.

After he pressed 1 for yes, a muffled male voice mumbled something about Medicare parts.

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## Fed Cuts Rates As Split Clouds Action in 2026

### Unemployment Fears vs. Inflation Anxiety

**By COLBY SMITH**

The Federal Reserve lowered interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point on Wednesday in a highly contentious decision. The split among policymakers suggested that the central bank may be done lowering borrowing costs for the time being unless there are clear signs that the labor market is weakening further.

The decision to cut for a third meeting in a row shifted interest rates to a new range of 3.5 percent to 3.75 percent. It was the fourth straight vote that was not backed by all members of the 12-person Federal Open Market Committee, underscoring how fractured the central bank has become as it grapples with the risk of rising unemployment and sticky inflation.

Stephen I. Miran, a member of the Board of Governors, opposed the decision in favor of a larger, half-point reduction. It is the third meeting in a row at which Mr. Miran has dissented. He was tapped by President Trump to join the Fed in September and is on a temporary leave of absence from the White House.

Jeffrey R. Schmid, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, voted for the Fed to stand pat, as he did in October. He was joined this time by Austan D. Goolsbee, president of the Chicago Fed.

That degree of division is rare for Jerome H. Powell, the Fed chair, who has previously been able to corral his colleagues to move as a largely cohesive group even while navigating tricky economic terrain. The split inside the Fed has only dialed up the pressure on Mr. Powell, who is simultaneously facing attacks from Mr. Trump and contenders seeking to replace him when his term as chair ends in May.

At a news conference after the decision, Mr. Powell said that divisions were only natural given the complicated environment the central bank is navigating. He said he could have made the case either way for the Fed to cut interest rates or pause reductions, describing it as a “close call.”

“You’ve got one tool,” he said. “You can’t do two things at once.”

New projections released on

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Secretary of State Marco Rubio halted a Biden-era move to a sans serif font at the State Department, casting a return to Times New Roman as part of a push to stamp out diversity efforts. PAGE A13

Calibri

**A Typeface Falls Victim  
To the D.E.I. Backlash**

Times New Roman

Secretary of State Marco Rubio halted a Biden-era move to a sans serif font at the State Department, casting a return to Times New Roman as part of a push to stamp out diversity efforts. PAGE A13



**Art Sent With Love From a Chinese Jail**

The artist Gao Zhen tore letter paper by hand into images for his wife and son, who are also unable to leave China. Page A6.

## U.S. TAKES TANKER IN BID TO SQUEEZE MADURO FURTHER

### TARGETING OIL MARKET

### As Trump Claims ‘Good Reason,’ Venezuela Sees ‘Piracy’

*This article is by Tyler Pager, Eric Schmitt and Nicholas Nehamas.*

WASHINGTON — The United States seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela on Wednesday, a dramatic escalation in President Trump's pressure campaign against Nicolás Maduro, the leader of Venezuela.

Speaking at the White House before an event on a new luxury visa program, Mr. Trump announced the operation and said it was “a large tanker, very large,” adding, without elaboration, that “other things are happening.”

When asked about the ship's oil, Mr. Trump said, “Well, we keep it, I guess.” He declined to say who owned the tanker. “It was seized for a very good reason,” he added.

Three U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a law enforcement operation, said the ship was carrying Venezuelan oil. They said there was no resistance from the crew and no casualties.

In a statement, Venezuela's government called the seizure a “barefaced robbery and an act of international piracy” aimed at stripping the country of its oil wealth.

The operation was the latest tactic in an expanding effort to squeeze Venezuela and pressure Mr. Maduro. The Trump administration has accused him of running a “narcoterrorist” cartel sending drugs to the United States, although many current and former officials in Washington say the campaign is ultimately aimed at regime change.

Since September, the United States has launched more than 22 known strikes against boats in the region, killing more than 80 people. The Trump administration insists, without publicly providing evidence, that the boats are smuggling drugs. Legal experts say the strikes may violate international law.

Attorney General Pam Bondi posted a video on Wednesday evening on social media showing armed U.S. forces rappelling from a helicopter onto the deck of the tanker. The video could not be independently verified.

Ms. Bondi said the operation included the F.B.I., the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard, supported by the Pentagon. She said the tanker had been used to transport “sanc-

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**BOAT STRIKES** A closer look at the Pentagon's strategy for dealing with survivors. PAGE A10

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Maria Corina Machado's decision to leave Venezuela to travel to Norway carries risks. News Analysis. PAGE A11

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After decades of growth from mining gemstones, Canada's Northwest Territories are facing a crossroads. PAGE A4



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Some Republicans have resisted a new congressional map despite lobbying from the White House and threats of political consequences. PAGE A15

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An impeachment bid against Robert F. Kennedy Jr. by Haley Stevens, a House Democrat running for Senate in Michigan, is all but certain to fail. PAGE A17

**Effectiveness of Arrests**  
In high-profile Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in major cities, most of those arrested had no criminal record, data shows. PAGE A18

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An us-versus-them mentality has emerged between the company's new artificial intelligence team and longtime top executives. PAGE B1

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The president's decision to involve himself in the Warner Bros. deal puts pressure on the Justice Dept. PAGE B1

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N.F.L. team executives believe the top quarterbacks eligible for the 2026 draft should stay in college. PAGE B6

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Shows like “Pluribus” and “Die My Love” take viewers inside the minds of their complex protagonists. PAGE C1

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Ryan Coogler discusses his plans post-“Sinners,” and why he isn't particularly interested in judging things. PAGE C1



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In her comedy special, the “S.N.L.” cast member Sarah Sherman is aiming to make her audience squirm. PAGE D7

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The left-wing podcaster Jennifer Welch is fed up with President Trump. But Democrats can infuriate her too. PAGE D1

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