

TODAY IS CHRISTMAS! REMEMBER TO GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITIES!

**"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"**

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Prices in Canada may be higher

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IVOR PRICKETT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**A Fraught Escape From the Horrors of Sudan**

Refugees returned to a camp in eastern Chad after collecting material to build huts. Many had fled the paramilitary takeover of El Fasher, in the Darfur region. Page A6.

**Trump's Moves  
Imperil Lifeline  
For Venezuela**By ANATOLY KURMANAEV  
and REBECCA F. ELLIOTT

The United States' aggressive campaign against tankers carrying Venezuelan crude has thrown the country's oil industry into disarray, jeopardizing its government's main source of revenue.

President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela has been struggling to adjust to President Trump's dramatic escalation of pressure against his government, which has seen U.S. law enforcement agents taking action against three tankers involved in the export of Venezuelan crude, according to people close to the Venezuelan oil industry. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Venezuela's ports are piling up with tankers filled with oil, as officials fear releasing them into international waters and into the cross hairs of the United States. Tankers bound for Venezuela have turned around midway, shipping data shows. And shipowners are canceling contracts to load crude, the people said.

In the past two weeks, the United States seized one sanctioned tanker carrying oil as it sailed from Venezuela toward Asia. It intercepted another oil vessel that was not under U.S. sanctions. And the U.S. Coast Guard tried to board a third tanker as it was on the way to Venezuela to pick up cargo.

The measures have paralyzed Venezuela's oil export industry, according to the people and shipping data. Oil accounts for a vast majority of the country's foreign currency earnings.

To keep the country's oil wells pumping, the Maduro government is considering borrowing privately owned tanker ships to store the crude until it figures out how to sell the resource, the people said. But that would only go so far.

"This can't go on for months on end," said Jim Burkhard, global head of crude oil research for S&P Global Energy, a research firm.

Mr. Maduro is also weighing a more forceful response, the people said.

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**Father and Son Bond With \$108 Billion Bid for Media Moguldom**

By THEODORE SCHLEIFER

When David Ellison became a teenager, his father, Larry, bought him a gift not usually bestowed on a 13th birthday: his own Katana stunt plane. The two had spent little meaningful time together. But with their own aircraft, the father and son could bond in the air, practicing aerobatic flips and ruling the skies together.

Now, Larry Ellison is trying to

help buy his son a media empire so they can rule Hollywood and news together.

What was once a relatively weak father-and-son relationship has transformed into one of modern media's most intriguing business partnerships. Towering behind almost every move made by David Ellison, now 42 and the chief executive of Paramount, is his swaggering 81-year-old father, the billionaire co-founder of the software giant Oracle.

**Warner Bros. Discovery  
in Ellisons' Sights**

The two have formed an unusual tag team in their pursuit of major media deals, according to more than two dozen people with knowledge of their interactions. They bought Paramount this summer, and now they are hunting Warner Bros. Discovery with a

\$108 billion hostile bid.

On Monday, David Ellison made it clearer than ever that his father is the centerpiece of this bid, telling Warner Bros. that Larry Ellison personally guaranteed \$40.4 billion for Paramount's offer. David Ellison has referred to the deal as something "we" — or "the Ellison family" — were pursuing. Both have sought to arm-twist Warner executives.

Father and son speak about five

Continued on Page A20

**Deluge Augurs  
Havoc in L.A.  
Over Holidays**

This article is by Jacey Fortin, Orlando Mayorquin and Judson Jones.

An intense winter storm drenched Southern California on Wednesday, setting off flash floods and debris flows that closed roadways, and forcing residents to evacuate in parts of the Los Angeles region.

The storm, part of a weather system that could bring record rainfall over the holidays, has raised concern among officials about mudslides and even worse flooding, particularly in places where the ground is still scarred from wildfires in January.

By midmorning on Wednesday, rushing debris flows had shut down Highway 2 in San Bernardino County, east of Los Angeles, and fire crews there were evacuating homes. Battered by heavy surf, Ventura County's most famous fishing spot, the Ventura Pier, closed and would not reopen before the weekend.

Firefighters rescued a man who had been trapped in a drainage tunnel by the Los Angeles River, lowering a ladder so that he could climb out.

Mayor Karen Bass of Los Angeles and other officials have been repeating the same warning to residents: Stay off the roads if you can. "We have had a number of major storms this year, and I ask all Angelenos to take this one seriously during this holiday week,"

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**Less Santa, More Claws**

Christmas trees made of lobster traps began as a quaint New England curiosity. Now the structures, often decorated with buoys, draw visitors for photo shoots and even marriage proposals. Page A12.

**Investigators Find Few Clues in Detached Life of Brown Suspect**By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS  
and AZAM AHMED

Claudio Neves Valente was like a ghost.

He dropped out of Brown University in the early 2000s, and friends and family have said they had no idea what happened to him until he appeared two decades later, accused of killing two students at Brown University and a Massachusetts Institute of Technology

professor this month.

Now, law enforcement officials are piecing together his life in the intervening years and trying to understand what drove him. But Mr. Neves Valente, once known for his intelligence as a young student, led what appears to have been a quiet and disconnected life once he left the university, making his path difficult to track.

Friends and family said they had lost touch with him, and few

**Tracking the Trail of a  
Former Top Student**

neighbors recalled his presence. He left few records or traces on the internet.

Originally from Portugal, Mr. Neves Valente was estranged from his family there. But after he left Brown in the spring of 2001, it

appears he returned to his home country, where he worked for a major Portuguese internet services provider known as SAPO. He was employed at the Lisbon-based company between 2010 and 2013, according to a spokeswoman for MEO, a telecommunications firm that owns SAPO.

Mr. Neves Valente obtained a visa to come to the United States in 2017, and a police affidavit sug-

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INTERNATIONAL A4-11

**Celebration Mixed With Hope**

Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem revived public Christmas events paused during the Gaza conflict. PAGE A11

**The End for a Kabul Cinema**

Built in the 1960s, the Ariana closed under the Taliban and was razed to make way for a shopping mall. PAGE A5

**BUSINESS B1-4****Downplaying the Risks of A.I.**

The administration has dismissed concerns of mass job losses and a potential financial bubble as the president cheers the sector's soaring stock prices. PAGE B1

**Crypto for Christmas**

Despite recent volatility in the market, Gen Zers are still open to receiving digital currencies as gifts. PAGE B1

**SPORTS B5-8****N.F.L. Alum Pays It Forward**

Even Laveranues Coles' closest friends didn't understand why he would choose to become a cop at age 47. PAGE B5



NATIONAL A12-17, 20

**Scarred Community Brightens**

Nearly a year after a wildfire devastated Altadena, Calif., putting up holiday lights serves as a catharsis. PAGE A13

**A Race to Save Wind Farms**

The Democratic governors of several states join the fight against President Trump's war on wind projects. PAGE A15

**ARTS C1-6****Hurdling Toward His Future**

Timothée Chalamet stars as a magnetic, striving table-tennis champ in a lost Lower East Side in "Marty Supreme," which our critic calls one of the most exciting movies of the year. PAGE C1

**A Game of Ice and Fire**

"Heated Rivalry" started as "a small Canadian show" about a romance between two closeted male professional hockey players and quickly grew into a surprise hit for HBO Max. PAGE C1

**OPINION A18-19****Michelle Goldberg**

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THURSDAY STYLES D1-8

**Heroes Make the Rounds**

Despite a murky future for the postal service's 500,000 employees, mail carriers are valued members of the community, particularly in rural areas. PAGE D1



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