

Safety Threats

Flagged Before

Fatal Fire Hit

Residents Had Warned

Hong Kong Officials

This article is by **Selam Gebrekidan, Amy Chang Chien and Joy Dong.**

HONG KONG — More than a year before a fire devoured a complex of high-rise towers in Hong Kong, residents alerted officials about potential fire safety violations on a renovation project there.

This week, their worst fears came true in one of the deadliest infernos in Hong Kong’s history.

The fire that started on Wednesday at Wang Fuk Court, a housing complex with about 2,000 apartments, killed at least 128 people by Friday’s tally and injured 78 others. About 200 people are unaccounted for.

What ignited the ferocious fire is not yet known. But as investigators comb through the buildings’ charred shells in search of evidence, they are asking whether negligence played a role in the devastation.

Investigators have focused on the quality of construction materials used for the renovation, such as netting that covered bamboo scaffolding to keep objects from falling on passers-by and polystyrene foam panels installed to protect window glass from breaking.

As far back as September 2024, the estate’s residents had raised concerns to the city government about those materials.

They wrote to the city’s Labor Department saying that the netting might be flammable, according to the residents’ emails reviewed by The New York Times.

They also raised concerns about the foam panels, according to Jason Poon Chuk-hung, a civil engineer-turned-activist who teamed up with the residents in raising their complaints.

On Friday, city officials told reporters that the foam boards were highly flammable and had helped the fire spread at a terrible speed.

The Labor Department, which oversees workplace safety issues, at first wrongly dismissed the residents’ concerns about the netting, claiming that there were no rules on the use of flammable materials.

Continued on Page A7



SAHER ALGHORRA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**In Gaza, a Few Moments of Wonder**  
Showing “Up,” the Pixar animated movie, on Friday west of Gaza City. The screening was part of the Gaza Children’s Film Festival.

A Top Aide to Zelensky Resigns

Amid Scandal and Peace Talks

By **KIM BARKER** and **ANDREW E. KRAMER**

KYIV, Ukraine — President Volodymyr Zelensky’s powerful chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, resigned on Friday in the highest-level political realignment in Ukraine since Russia’s all-out invasion nearly four years ago.

The departure of Mr. Yermak, who had headed Ukraine’s negotiating team in peace talks with the Trump administration, put in doubt the future of the latest round of diplomatic efforts by the United States, Ukraine and European nations to end the war.

It also cost Mr. Zelensky a longtime close ally who had been a behind-the-scenes operator, a political enforcer and, as Ukraine’s fortunes in the war slumped, a light-

Chief of Staff’s House

Is Searched in Kyiv

ning rod for criticism over much of what had gone wrong, including allegations of theft from state companies.

Mr. Yermak stepped down amid a spiraling, \$100 million embezzlement scandal that has already led to the dismissal of two cabinet ministers and threatened to topple Mr. Zelensky’s entire cabinet.

“I am grateful to Andriy for always representing Ukraine’s position in the negotiation track exactly as it should be represented,” Mr. Zelensky said in a video address announcing the resignation.

Continued on Page A8

Builders in California Stifle

‘Not in My Backyard’ Crowd

By **CONOR DOUGHERTY**

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — One way or the other, the answer was going to be yes.

When Leo Pustilnikov filed an application in 2023 with the City of Beverly Hills to build a 19-story apartment tower with a hotel, the developer didn’t care that it flouted the zoning code or that the City Council was unanimously opposed to the project or that neighbors had described it as a “monstrosity.” He had the city backed into a corner and wasn’t going to pretend otherwise.

“My philosophy is always this: If I can work with a city, I’m more than happy to,” Mr. Pustilnikov said. “When a city doesn’t want to help, I have no problem ignoring them and doing it my way.”

This was not the way business was normally done in Beverly Hills, a famously wealthy enclave where development is tightly controlled. It’s a tough place to build. Land is expensive, labor is expensive and NIMBYism — the not-in-my-backyard sentiment that exists everywhere — is particularly strong. The city’s zoning rules discourage projects that are tall and bulky and that might anger the owners of single-family houses nearby. Five stories is the tallest allowable height for a multifamily residential building — and those are permitted on only a few blocks of the city.

Mr. Pustilnikov was determined to change that. After two decades of investing in low-income apartments in downtown Los Angeles, he had stumbled upon a little-known state law that allowed him to ram high-density projects like the 19-story tower on South Linden Drive into cities that didn’t want them.

The law is called the “build-

**AMERICAN INERTIA**  
A Housing Shortfall

Continued on Page A12

TRUMP ESCALATES

MIGRANT STANCE

AFTER SHOOTINGS

ATTACKS GET PERSONAL

Using a Tragedy to Assail Naturalized Citizens and Refugees

By **SHAWN MCCREESH**

PALM BEACH, Fla. — The shooting of two National Guard members by a gunman identified by the authorities as an Afghan national has set off an especially intense level of fury in President Trump and a new push to step up his anti-immigration policies.

In a series of statements in the two days since the shooting on a Washington street corner just blocks from the White House, Mr. Trump has cast the attack as exactly what he has warned about and made clear that he intends to use it to pursue an even more maximalist version of his agenda.

In social media posts near midnight on Thanksgiving, he vowed to “permanently pause migration from all Third World Countries” and threatened to strip U.S. citizenship from naturalized migrants “who undermine domestic tranquility.” He threatened to “end all Federal benefits and subsidies to noncitizens of our Country” and deport foreigners deemed to be “non-compatible



TIERNY L. CROSS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump in Florida.

with Western Civilization.”

And in remarkably derogatory and personal terms, he assailed Somali refugees as preying in gangs on innocent Americans, and Representative Ilhan Omar, Democrat of Minnesota, who emigrated to the United States from Somalia and became a citizen 25 years ago, as someone who “probably came into the U.S.A. illegally.” He described her as “always wrapped in her swaddling hijab.”

Those statements came after he had ordered the administration to

Continued on Page A15

DOROTHY VOGEL, 1935-2025

Librarian With an Art Trove

Big Enough to Fill a Museum

By **ALEX WILLIAMS**

Dorothy Vogel, a librarian who, with her postal-clerk husband, Herbert, bought thousands of works from future art stars like Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd, stashing them in their cramped one-bedroom New York apartment and eventually handing over the entire collection to the National Gallery of Art without ever turning a profit, died on Nov. 10 in Manhattan. She was 90.

Her death, in a hospital, was confirmed by Kathryn Obler, a cousin. Ms. Vogel left no immediate survivors.

That the Vogels, who were modest in dress and bearing, would come to take their place as benefactors alongside Rockefellers and Mellons was every bit as unlikely as it was that some of the works they collected — like the tiny snippet of frayed rope by the Post-Minimalist artist Richard Tuttle — would land in one of the world’s premier art museums, alongside Vermeers and Van Goghs.

Throughout their decades as collectors, Ms. Vogel worked at the Brooklyn Public Library as a reference librarian, and Mr. Vogel,



FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Dorothy Vogel and her husband gave their collection to the National Gallery of Art.

a high school dropout from Harlem, did the night shift at a post office sorting mail. Their formal training in art, such as it was, consisted of the art classes Mr. Vogel took at New York University as a young man and a few painting lessons the couple took together.

Their rent-controlled apartment on Manhattan’s Upper East Side functioned as a fine-art storage locker as well as an exhibition

Continued on Page A20

Middle-Age Ills

Can Be Linked

To Pregnancies

By **DANIELLE FRIEDMAN**

After Tania Saiz had a stroke at age 47, she went on a quest for answers.

She wasn’t aware of any significant health issues before the incident, and she had no known family history of cardiovascular disease. But as she looked for possible explanations, she discovered a clue from her past.

While she was pregnant with her daughter nearly 20 years earlier, she had developed preeclampsia, a complication in which the mother’s blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels. She was surprised to learn that the condition had raised her long-term risk for stroke.

“It was never brought up again,” beyond the initial postpartum period, Ms. Saiz said of her diagnosis, and it was not discussed as something that could influence her health later in life.

For most of modern medicine, the health care system has treated pregnancy as a finite event — a nine-month blip in a woman’s medical history. Once a woman reached the end of pregnancy, the prevailing wisdom held that she

Continued on Page A16



KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**The Holiday Shopping Season Kicks Off**  
Consumers in Manhattan on Friday. Gen X-ers, ready to spend, feel a chill from retailers. Page B1.



**Just Like Any Other Week**  
Top-ranked Ohio State has been careful to keep its emotional rivalry game with Michigan in perspective. PAGE B6

**iPad Looms in Skaggs Trial**  
An iPad could trigger millions in punitive damages against the Angels over the death of Tyler Skaggs. PAGE B8

**Israelis Kill 2 in West Bank**  
Video appears to show Israeli soldiers opening fire after the men had surrendered. Israel said it would investigate the shooting. PAGE A9

**Trump Said to Call Maduro**  
They discussed a possible meeting, but nothing has been scheduled, and the administration continues to increase the pressure on Venezuela. PAGE A6

**Tense Election in Honduras**  
Voters will choose between a left-wing presidential candidate and two conservatives, one backed by President Trump. PAGE A4

**Fight to Save Research Hub**  
Industry groups and scientists have urged the Trump administration to reconsider its plan to close an Agriculture Department center in Maryland and disperse its work. PAGE A11

**Cover for Ballroom Donors**  
The White House withheld the identities of several donors to the project, including some people who have business before the administration, The New York Times has found. PAGE A14

**Lisa Schwarzbaum** PAGE A19

**‘The Compleat Beatles’**  
The great Beatles documentary is difficult to see legally but had an impact on a generation. PAGE C1

**Staging a Ballet of Rebellion**  
A Norwegian dance company brings respect and sensitivity to a painful episode in Indigenous history. PAGE C3



**Boosting Fringe Meme Makers**  
The growth of A.I. has enabled right-wing users to promote President Trump’s agenda through images and videos. He has taken notice. PAGE B1

**36 Hours in Memphis**  
A vibrant and unpretentious Southern city that takes music fans through the sounds of a place where rock ‘n’ roll was born and the blues flourished. PAGE C10

