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Phra Maha Nikhom, a Buddhist abbot in Thailand, swam in the Kok River as a boy, an activity that would pose health risks today.

A Thai River Runs Toxic as Mining Flourishes Across a Border

By HANNAH BEECH

ON THE KOK RIVER, Thailand — When Phra Maha Nikhom was a boy, he swam and splashed in the crystalline Kok River. He caught crabs and fish. Today, he is the abbot of a Buddhist temple near Thailand’s border with Myanmar, and monks, with their copious saffron robes, don’t tend toward water play. But even if he wanted to, this tributary of the Mekong, Southeast Asia’s life force, is now a forbidden zone.

Unregulated rare earth mining in Myanmar, directed by Chinese

enterprises, is poisoning the Kok and at least three other rivers that flow through Thailand. For months, levels of arsenic and other toxic metals have spiked to dangerous levels in Thai waterways, including the Mekong, government data shows.

The Kok, which normally flows limpid at this time of year, now runs brown, sullied with sediment believed to have been churned up by the mining in Myanmar. People who enter the river complain of skin ailments. The threat of longer-term health problems associated with toxic materials from rare earth extraction is sobering,

A Rare Earth Boom in War Zones Churns Up Contaminants

including lung, bladder and kidney cancers.

“Seeing the river like this is like seeing your mother in the I.C.U., but you cannot help, and you are separated from her by a glass window,” Phra Maha Nikhom said.

The residents of Thaton, the riverside village where he grew up,

were officially informed of the contaminants only in April, months after government data showed unsafe levels. More troublingly, the local authorities, who have warned residents to stay away from the water, have not checked for other pollutants, including radioactive ones, that are often released through rare earth processing.

“This is the biggest concern of the people,” said Dr. Suebsakun Kidnukorn of Mae Fah Luang University in the city of Chiang Rai, who earlier this year tested river water only to be chastised by local

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Allies of Trump Teamed to Fell A School Head

By STEPHANIE SAUL

The Jefferson Council, a band of conservative-leaning University of Virginia alumni, was impatient and fed up.

For years, the group had railed against the university’s president, James E. Ryan, for his robust promotion of campus diversity initiatives.

They had counted on Glenn Youngkin, the state’s Republican governor who vocally opposed D.E.I., to force a new direction at one of the country’s most prestigious public universities. But as 2025, the final year of Mr. Youngkin’s term, began, the university’s diversity, equity and inclusion apparatus was still in place. And time was running out, with polls showing that the governor’s race would be an uphill battle for a Republican candidate.

But the Jefferson Council had a new ally in its campaign: President Trump.

In his first week in office, Mr. Trump signed executive orders banning federal diversity, equity and inclusion programs, which threatened any public and private universities receiving federal funds.

The Justice Department then hired a lawyer to help enforce those orders at its Civil Rights Division: Gregory W. Brown, a University of Virginia alumnus and donor.

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Michael Maggart, who appeared, second from left, in “Asteroid City,” keeps getting bit parts in Wes Anderson films. A math tutor, he has no other acting credits, and no interest in acting otherwise.

Wes Anderson’s Easter Egg? A High School Pal.

By SOPAN DEB

Michael Maggart spends most days running the online tutoring company he founded after a decade working as a math teacher. But every now and then, his high school friend Wes Anderson, the director, contacts him out of the blue, summons him to a film set and sends him to wardrobe.

There’s Maggart playing a security guard in “The Phoenixian Scheme,” Anderson’s latest film, which was released in May. Previously, he played a detective in An-

Fastidious Filmmaking, Sizable Starry Casts, and Then This Guy

derson’s 2023 film, “Asteroid City,” and a hotel concierge in Anderson’s second feature film, “Rushmore” (1998). His credits also include a series of AT&T commercials that Anderson directed, and Anderson’s 2023 short film, “The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar.”



VINCENT ALBAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Maggart, 55, who splits his time between Austin, Texas, and New York City, has no formal training or interest in pursuing a career in acting. He has no other acting credits and would never have appeared in movies at all if not for an old friend who happens to be a celebrated film director — one who likes him enough to put him on camera. For Maggart, this has meant hobnobbing, dining and running lines with A-list actors like Tom Hanks, Bill Murray and Benicio Del Toro.

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BUSINESS B1-7

The Global A.I. Divide

As countries race to build artificial intelligence, a yawning gap has opened around the world.

Mideast Warfare Moves Online

The conflict between Israel and Iran saw propaganda, disinformation and attacks aided by social media.

NATIONAL A12-20

Fired, Rehired, Fired Again

Former workers are finding that perhaps the only thing harder than being laid off from the federal government is staying that way.

Years of Brutality

There were signs of violence in a Mississippi sheriff’s office for years, but inquiries initially led nowhere.

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

False Claim on PEPFAR

A Trump official, contrary to fact, accused the AIDS relief program of funding abortions in Russia.



ARTS C1-6

‘Severance’ Leads Emmy Nods

The dystopian workplace series received 27 nominations for Apple TV+, including one for best drama.

Bob Geldof Recalls Live Aid

The rock star-turned-activist reflects on the epic 1985 benefit concert and why it could not happen now.

SPORTS B8-11

Down to Earth and Worldwide

The Liberty Star Sabrina Ionescu, a W.N.B.A. and Olympic champion with a top-selling sneaker, is thriving on and off the court.

OBITUARIES A21, 24

Force Behind Precise GPS

Daniel Kleppner developed an atomic clock essential to global positioning systems, and helped confirm an Einstein prediction. He was 92.

OPINION A22-23

Michelle Goldberg

THE WEATHER

Today, very humid, clouds and sun, afternoon thunderstorm, high 88. Tonight, humid, thunderstorm, low 76. Tomorrow, humid, some sun, high 90. Weather map, Page B12.

RIISING INFLATION SIGNALS HAZARDS IN TRUMP TARIFFS

COSTS FOR AMERICANS

Gauge Offers Preview of Risk From Planned Higher Levies

By TONY ROMM and COLBY SMITH

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s steep tariffs have started to weigh on consumers’ wallets, sending prices higher as the White House readies a more drastic — and potentially costly — expansion of its global trade war.

The risks in Mr. Trump’s economic strategy began to show on Tuesday, with the release of data that found inflation had accelerated in June. Prices rose noticeably on appliances, clothing and furniture, products that are all heavily exposed to the president’s taxes on imports from Canada, China and other major trading partners.

The inflation report undercut Mr. Trump’s continued assertions that Americans would not face financial repercussions from his in-



DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG

The price of appliances rose 1.9 percent in June. Furnishings and apparel also went up.

creasingly aggressive trade brinkmanship. Since taking office, the president has imposed withering duties on allies and adversaries alike, with additional taxes on a variety of products such as cars and steel.

The latest reading of the Consumer Price Index recorded the first signs of what economists had predicted all along, with U.S. businesses and consumers shouldering a growing share of the burden from the taxes Mr. Trump has imposed on imports.

The data also carried perhaps a new warning for the president as he prepares another round of tariffs on dozens of countries in about two weeks, including a 30 percent tax on imports from the European Union. Some experts said that an

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President Fueled Conspiracists. Will They Revolt Over Epstein?

By SHAWN MCCREESH

WASHINGTON — After years spent spreading spidery conspiracy theories for his own political gain, President Trump has found himself wrapped up in the stickiest one of them all.

For more than a week, the political movement he created has been convulsing with righteous fury over things he and his attorney general have been saying and doing — or rather, not doing — as it relates to the life and death of Jeffrey Epstein.

Mr. Trump keeps commanding his supporters to move on from their fixations over the disgraced financier and registered sex offender. But many of his supporters simply cannot swallow the anticlimactic conclusion that the Department of Justice put

forth a week ago when it basically said there was nothing to see here, folks.

By the week’s end, a rabble of conspiracists who’ve been hand-fed for years by Mr. Trump broke into open revolt against him.

The fallout is testing the power the president holds over his most loyal followers, the ones who have trusted him all along and who believed they would learn a whole lot more about the Epstein saga if they returned Mr. Trump to office.

It is entirely too soon to know what the revolt will mean or if and when it might sputter out, but the nature of it was stunning to behold. It was like a Möbius strip of paranoia and distrust: A

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FOOD D1-8

Added Courses: Chinese Food

Like many college towns, the area around the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has been transformed by a surge of foreign students.

