



Families want return of Israeli hostages, not war

In recent days, the families of Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza have grown increasingly desperate. They've stormed highways, blocked convoys of aid heading into Gaza and erected a noisy protest camp in front of the Jerusalem home of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This week, dozens of them burst into a session of parliament, screaming at lawmakers: "You will not sit here while our children die."

Desperate relatives get bolder in confronting Netanyahu

By Kate Linthicum
REPORTING FROM JERUSALEM

More than three months into Israel's campaign to destroy Hamas, many of the families have grown disillusioned with the war and convinced that only a cease-fire — not further military operations — will free their loved ones. Their plea that Israel do whatever is necessary to secure the release of the hostages has put them at odds with Netanyahu, who has vowed that the siege on Gaza will continue "until the end, until total

[See Families, A4]



Photographs by MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

PROTESTERS CALL for the return of hostages, top, taken by Hamas militants and cause a traffic jam, above, in Jerusalem on Wednesday. Israelis are united behind the hostages but divided on how to get them back. Families of the captives say a cease-fire is the answer.

Why antiviral drugs are underused

Some high-risk COVID patients refuse them and others don't get offer

By Emily Alpert Reyes

As the toll from the COVID-19 pandemic continued to mount, antiviral medications such as Paxlovid were hailed by health officials as an important way to reduce the risk of severe illness or death. Yet the drugs have remained underused, studies have found. In Boston, a group of researchers wanted to know why — and what could be done about it. Their new findings, published Thursday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suggest that some vulnerable patients were not offered the



A STUDY says doctors need more education to ensure vulnerable COVID patients get antiviral drugs.

prescription medicines at all, and that doctors need more education to make sure the drugs get to patients who could benefit. Researchers from the VA Cooperative Studies Program delved into records from the Veterans Health Administration to look more closely at what happened to high-risk patients who never got Paxlovid, remdesivir or molnupiravir. They focused on 110 patients who received organ transplants or had other medical conditions such as chronic lymphocytic leukemia that were likely to leave them immunocompromised and thus at greater risk from COVID-19 despite [See Paxlovid, A10]

Groundwater levels dropping around the world

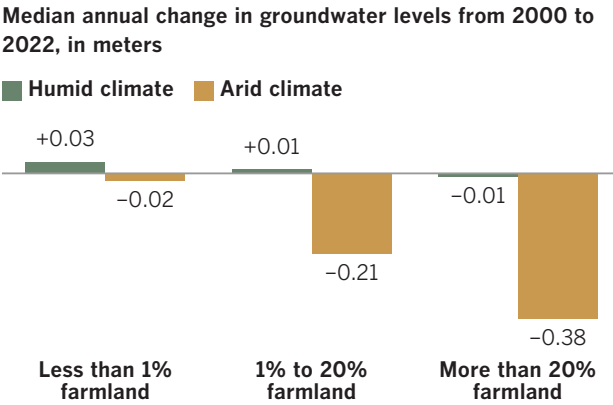
But global study also finds that some efforts are reducing declines and boosting aquifers.

By Ian James

From California's Central Valley to the croplands of Iran, groundwater depletion has accelerated over the last four decades across the world's arid food-producing regions. In many parts of the western United States, India, Chile, Spain, Mexico and other countries, groundwater levels have been rapidly declining as water is heavily pumped to irrigate farmlands, according to a new study analyzing measurements from 170,000 wells in more than 40 countries. The research, published this week in the journal Nature, reveals that overpump-

ing is taking a widespread and worsening toll on aquifers that hold critical reserves as many regions face more intense bouts of dry conditions with climate change. The analysis shows that parts of California have some of the fastest-declining aquifer levels in the world. "Over and over again, we see places where groundwater is being depleted," said Debra Perrone, an associate professor of environmental studies at UC Santa Barbara and one of the study's lead authors. "Where we're really seeing these trends is where we have arid climates." Many dry regions depend more on groundwater than areas with wetter climates. And where water levels are dropping because of over-pumping, the consequences can include dry wells, diminished streams and sinking ground, as well as the loss of [See Groundwater, A10]

Groundwater levels are declining in the world's arid farming regions



GABRIELLE LAMARR LEMÉE Los Angeles Times

L.A. Times names first female editor

Editorial page editor Terry Tang to lead on interim basis as more layoffs reported.

By Meg James

Los Angeles Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong has appointed Terry Tang, editor of the editorial page, as the paper's executive editor on an interim basis. Tang, whose appointment takes effect immediately, becomes the first female editor in the paper's 142-year history. Soon-Shiong moved quickly to name the new leader to settle a newsroom roiled by substantial layoffs, a one-day strike and the loss of three top editors in the last two weeks. In turning to Tang, a respected journalist who earlier in her career worked at the New York Times, Soon-Shiong selected a leader with whom he



RICARDO DEARATANHA L.A. Times
TERRY TANG joined The Times in 2019 and has led the Opinion section for nearly two years.

had already established trust. The Times laid off about 120 journalists this week to cut costs to reduce the financial losses the Soon-Shiong family has absorbed since they acquired the organization in 2018 for \$500 million. Projections showed another year of heavy losses. Tang replaces Kevin Merida, who stepped down [See Times, A7]

L.A. traffic deaths surpass homicides

Pedestrians made up the majority of the 336 fatalities during 2023, a record high. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Bryant's legacy still stands tall

Four years after his death, the Lakers legend is still inspiring people, Bill Plaschke writes. **SPORTS, B10**

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 71/52. **B6**

Boeing's Max 9s closer to a return

An FAA inspection and maintenance process could OK the jets by this weekend. **BUSINESS, A6**



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