

Outcry elicits new approach to crime

Legislation marks a turn away from progressive strategies by D.C. Council

BY EMILY DAVIES
AND MEAGAN FLYNN

The D.C. Council on Tuesday is likely to solidify its turn away from the liberal strategies it once trumpeted as lawmakers aim to pass new legislation that will impose harsher penalties for gun crimes and keep more people locked up as they await trial in the nation's capital.

The legislation, known as the Secure D.C. Omnibus Amendment Act, comes after months of public outcry that city leaders were not doing enough to stop stores from being ransacked and people from getting carjacked or shot. It reflects months of fiery neighborhood meetings, calls from fed-up business owners, closed-door consultations with top public safety brass and intense oversight from congressional lawmakers who on a national stage derided what they called “soft-on-crime” policies, according to those involved in shaping the law.

And it is not without controversy. It adjusts some of the law enforcement accountability changes the city imposed after the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. Activists packed a council hearing where lawmakers debated the measure last month, at times jeering the member who

SEE **CRIME BILL** ON **A4**

Cyberattack spreads pain across U.S. health system

Millions are affected; officials say solvency of some hospitals is at risk

BY DANIEL GILBERT,
DAN DIAMOND,
CHRISTOPHER ROWLAND
AND KIM BELLWARE

The fallout from the hack of a little-known but pivotal health-care company is inflicting pain on hospitals, doctor offices, pharmacies and millions of patients across the nation, with government and industry officials calling it one of the most serious attacks on the health-care system in U.S. history.

The Feb. 21 cyberattack on Change Healthcare, owned by UnitedHealth Group, has cut off many health-care organizations from the systems they rely on to transmit patients' health-care claims and get paid. The ensuing outage doesn't appear to affect any of the systems that provide direct, critical care to patients. But it has laid bare a vulnerability that cuts across the U.S. health-care system, frustrating patients unable to pay for their medications at the pharmacy counter and threatening the financial solvency of some organizations that rely heavily on Change's platform.

Change Healthcare is a juggernaut in the health-care world, processing 15 billion claims totaling more than \$1.5 trillion a year, the

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BRIDGET BENNETT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Visitors waded through Lake Manly, formed on the usually dry Badwater Basin in Death Valley National Park. The rare comeback is one side of the extremes of climate change, which baked the region in a years-long megadrought and has now flooded it with rain.

In Death Valley, abnormal rains resurrect a long-dead lake

Lake Manly's reappearance delights tourists and scientists alike

BY REIS THEBAULT IN DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, CALIF.

If it weren't for all the floating, the paddling, the sloshing around, the lake smack in the middle of this desert might be mistaken for a mirage.

This is the driest place in America, a place famous for sweltering 120-degree summers, a place whose very name suggests inhospitableness. It is perhaps the last corner of the continent where one might expect to stumble upon miles of water.

But Lake Manly is no illusion. Instead, it's more like a ghost from Death Valley's prehistoric past, temporarily resurrected by the fast-changing, climate-churning present.

Thanks to the record-setting rain that has washed over California during the last six months, Lake Manly — which dried up thousands of years ago — has reformed on the floor of Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America. This unlikely and exceedingly rare comeback is a message from the

warming climate, which baked the region in a years-long megadrought and has now flooded it with rain.

At the same time, it is delighting visitors, park rangers and the scientists who have devoted their careers to studying Death Valley and have called the lake's reappearance one of the most spectacular natural phenomena they have ever witnessed. But perhaps most profoundly, it shows that the desert is a dynamic place, home to complex and vibrant ecosystems — not the desolate and barren expanse of popular imagination.

Like an uncommon desert super bloom, the return of Lake Manly serves as a powerful declaration: Death Valley is alive.

“This is the desert announcing its vitality,” said Mason Voehl, the executive director of the Amargosa

SEE **DEATH VALLEY** ON **A8**

Taliban envisions Afghanistan as cricket power

As its men's national team beats expectations, the government has ambitious plans for a stadium

BY RICK NOACK



ELISE BLANCHARD FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Children play cricket on a field in Kabul. The Taliban disapproved of sports during its first regime in the 1990s, but since seizing control in 2021, it has dreamed up big plans for cricket in Afghanistan.

KABUL — During the Taliban's first stint in power in the 1990s, its disdain for many sports meant that Kabul's main stadium drew some of its biggest crowds on the days it was used for public executions.

But since seizing control in Kabul for a second time in 2021, the Taliban has turned to making Afghanistan into a global cricketing power, with ambitious plans for a state-of-the-art cricket stadium that could host international matches.

The men's national team was already on the rise before the takeover but has continued to thrive under the new regime, defying expectations and scoring stunning upsets in international play. Privately funded cricket academies have seen a surge in the number of new players.

Cricket's appeal to the Taliban may be partly rooted in the sport's long-standing popularity in eth-

SEE **CRICKET** ON **A7**

Limits on aid starve Gazans

‘MAN-MADE’ HUNGER CRISIS IN ENCLAVE

U.S. food airdrops sign of growing rift with Israel

BY CLAIRE PARKER

JERUSALEM — On Saturday, the United States airdropped 38,000 meals into Gaza — a territory controlled not by a hostile power but by one of its closest allies.

The remarkable scene of American aid bundles floating down to starving Palestinians was the starkest illustration yet of the rift that has grown between the Biden administration and the Israeli government over the Gaza war. For months, Israel has resisted pressure from Washington to allow more humanitarian aid into the enclave, even as it relies on U.S. bombs and diplomatic support to carry out its punishing military campaign there.

Thursday's aid convoy tragedy — in which more than 100 people were killed and 700 injured in Gaza City, according to Palestinian officials — underscored the desperation of civilians in the Gaza Strip, which is hurtling toward a famine that humanitarian officials say is largely of Israel's making. They point to Israel's limiting of land entry points for aid;

SEE **GAZA** ON **A9**

A growing disconnect in the data on rent inflation

Most sources show costs cooling. Why do federal reports say otherwise?

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

Inflation came in hotter than expected in January, and it may take a few more months to know if that was a fluke or if price increases are getting stickier. But one key part of the inflation picture may already look far worse than things really are.

Rent costs have been driving inflation for months, at least in the way data shows up in the official reports. The Federal Reserve has pushed its baseline interest rate to the highest level in decades, and prices in most other areas are moderating. So it's been a bit of a mystery to economists why rent hasn't followed suit. That's especially because almost every data source, except the consumer price index kept by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that those costs actually are cooling significantly — or even falling — since growth peaked early last year.

Fresh data from Apartment List shows that rents fell for six consecutive months before ticking up slightly in February. Costs on leases are down 1 percent compared with a year ago nationwide, with more than half of the nation's largest cities seeing drops. In Austin, costs fell

SEE **RENT** ON **A3**

IN THE NEWS

Federal budget Congressional appropriators released six bills that, if passed this week, would keep about 40 percent of the government funded for the fiscal year. **A3**

A brisk migration business Undocumented Indians are using agents to hopscotch through countries and reach the United States. **A6**

THE NATION **Nikki Haley** sailed to victory in the GOP's D.C. primary, her first win in the campaign. **A2** **Thousands of** millionaires haven't filed tax returns for years, the IRS said. **A4**

THE WORLD **Pakistan's** premier was reelected, but a reprieve from political turmoil is unlikely to last. **A7** **Germany** is probing the potential leak of a call in which officials discussed arms for Ukraine. **A10**

THE ECONOMY **Shira Ovide** outlines four helpful uses for an AI chatbot. **A11**

THE REGION **Maryland House** members from Prince George's County backed bills that would give the county executive more discretion over how to pay for schools. **B1**

The D.C. Housing Authority has yet to resolve issues outlined in a 2022 federal report, and the agency's leader says its predicament is worse than many imagined. **B1** **The U.S. Holocaust** Memorial Museum gained a collection of intimate stories of loss and survival. **B1**

STYLE **On the road** to the Oscars, nominees are working the circuit in ways both subtle and not. **C1** **Five years after** the death of “90210” star Luke Perry, a biography looks back on a life that was both extraordinary and, for a celebrity, remarkably uneventful. **C1**

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