

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, sunshine, clouds in the afternoon, breezy, high 58. **Tonight**, showers, cloudy, low 45. **Tomorrow**, clouds giving way to some sun, high 60. Weather map is on Page A22.

VOL. CLXXIII No. 60,109 © 2024 The New York Times Company SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024 Prices in Canada may be higher \$4.00



TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

On Ukraine’s Killing Fields
The civilians who gather dead Russian soldiers face many of the war’s perils along the front, where death is ubiquitous. Page A8.

Grim Milestone for U.S. Reporter in Russian Cell

By **KATIE ROBERTSON**

One year ago on Friday, Ella Milman and Mikhail Gershkovich received a chilling phone call from the managing editor of The Wall Street Journal. Their son, Evan, a foreign correspondent for The Journal who was on a reporting assignment in Russia, had missed his daily security check-in.

“We were hoping this was some kind of error, that everything is going to be fine,” the older Mr. Gershkovich recalled. But the stunning reality became clear: The Russian authorities had detained Evan and accused him of spying for the American govern-



NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/A.F.P. — GETTY IMAGES
Evan Gershkovich in February.

ment, making him the first American reporter to be held on espionage charges in Russia since the end of the Cold War.

Since his arrest, Mr. Gershko-

vich, 32, has been held in the notorious high-security Lefortovo prison in Moscow, the same facility holding the people accused in the deadly attack at a concert venue in the city this month. The Journal and the U.S. government have vehemently denied that Mr. Gershkovich is a spy, saying he was an accredited journalist doing his job.

On Tuesday, Mr. Gershkovich’s detention was extended for yet another three months. A trial date has not been set.

“Every day is very hard — every day we feel that he is not here,” Ms. Milman said. “We want him at home, and it has been a year. It’s

Continued on Page A7

EMISSIONS RULE TARGETS TRUCKS

**U.S. Moves to Push Sales
Of Electric Vehicles**

By **CORAL DAVENPORT
and JACK EWING**

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Friday announced a regulation designed to turbocharge sales of electric or other zero-emission heavy vehicles, from school buses to cement mixers, as part of its multifront attack on global warming.

The Environmental Protection Agency projects the new rule could mean that 25 percent of new long-haul trucks, the heaviest on the road, and 40 percent of medium-size trucks, like box trucks and landscaping vehicles, could be nonpolluting by 2032. Today, fewer than 2 percent of new heavy trucks sold in the United States fit that bill.

The regulation would apply to more than 100 types of vehicles including tractor-trailers, ambulances, R.V.s, garbage trucks and moving vans.

The rule does not mandate the sales of electric trucks or any other type of zero or low-emission truck. Rather, it increasingly limits the amount of pollution allowed from trucks across a manufacturer’s product line over time, starting in model year 2027. It would be up to the manufacturer to decide how to comply. Options could include using technologies like hybrids or hydrogen fuel cells or sharply increasing the fuel efficiency of the conventional trucks.

The truck regulation follows another rule made final last week that is designed to ensure that the majority of new passenger cars and light trucks sold in the United States are all-electric or hybrids by 2032, up from just 7.6 percent last year.

Together, the car and truck rules are intended to slash carbon dioxide pollution from transportation, the nation’s largest source of the fossil fuel emissions that are driving climate change and that helped to make 2023 the hottest year in recorded history. Electric vehicles are central to President

Continued on Page A12

Pandemic Effect: Absence From Schools Is Soaring

**Habit of Daily Attendance Broken, and the
Shift Turns Education ‘Optional’**

By **SARAH MERVOSH and FRANCESCA PARIS**

In Anchorage, affluent families set off on ski trips and other lengthy vacations, with the assumption that their children can keep up with schoolwork online.

In a working-class pocket of Michigan, school administrators have tried almost everything, including pajama day, to boost student attendance.

And across the country, students with heightened anxiety are opting to stay home rather than face the classroom.

In the four years since the pandemic closed schools, U.S. education has struggled to recover on a number of fronts, from learning loss, to enrollment, to student behavior.

But perhaps no issue has been as stubborn and pervasive as a sharp increase in student absenteeism, a problem that cuts across demographics and has continued long after schools reopened.

Nationally, an estimated 26 percent of public school students were considered chronically absent last school year, up from 15 percent before the pandemic, according to the most recent data, from 40 states and Washington, D.C., compiled by the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute. Chronic absence is typically defined as missing at least 10 percent of the school year, or about 18 days, for any reason.

The increases have occurred in districts big and small, and across income and race. For districts in wealthier areas, chronic absenteeism rates have about doubled, to 19 percent in the 2022-23 school year from 10 percent before the pandemic, a New York Times

analysis of the data found.

Poor communities, which started with elevated rates of student absenteeism, are facing an even bigger crisis: Around 32 percent of students in the poorest districts were chronically absent in the 2022-23 school year, up from 19 percent before the pandemic.

Even districts that reopened quickly during the pandemic, in fall 2020, have seen vast increases.

“The problem got worse for everybody in the same proportional way,” said Nat Malkus, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, who collected and studied the data.

The trends suggest that something fundamental has shifted in American childhood and the culture of school, in ways that may be long lasting. What was once a deeply ingrained habit — wake up, catch the bus, report to class — is now something far more tenuous.

“Our relationship with school became optional,” said Katie Rosanbalm, a psychologist and associate research professor with the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University.

The habit of daily attendance — and many families’ trust — was severed when schools shuttered in spring 2020. Even after schools reopened, things hardly snapped back to normal. Districts offered remote options, required Covid-19 quarantines and relaxed policies around attendance and grading.

Today, student absenteeism is a leading factor hindering the nation’s recovery from pandemic

Continued on Page A13



EVA MARIE UZCATEGUI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ricardo, 7, risked being separated from his mother, Olga, forever.

A Migrant Mother’s Struggle To Win Back Her Young Son

By **DEBORAH SONTAG**

Over the final four months of 2021, Olga, a Honduran immigrant in Hollywood, Fla., grew increasingly panicked. She could not find her 5-year-old son, Ricardo. After she’d fled her homeland to escape her abusive husband, the man also migrated, disappeared with the boy and broke off contact.

By day, Olga lived her life. She cut, colored and styled hair at a Miami salon, chatting with clients as if she hadn’t a care in the world. She mothered her 7-year-old daughter, Dariela, straining to distract her from the fact that her little brother was missing. But the nights were tough. “I cried into my pillow,” Olga said. “Where was my sweet little boy? Was he, at least, safe?”

He was not.

By the time Olga, then 28, tracked her son to Massachusetts, he had been removed from his father over allegations of physical abuse. Calling office after office of the Department of Children and

**Child Welfare System
Charts Tangled Path**

Families, she finally reached a woman who turned out to be Ricardo’s caseworker.

“Who are you?” the woman said.

“Yo soy la mamá,” Olga replied, bursting into tears.

In early January 2022, Olga, who asked that her last name be withheld to protect her children, flew to Boston. It would only be a matter of presenting evidence — Ricardo’s birth certificate, videos of him on her phone, DNA if necessary — before she could take him home, she thought.

But when immigration and child welfare are involved — two contentious issues and their beleaguered systems — nothing is straightforward.

Under an interstate compact,

Continued on Page A14



CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jin-Oh Hyun, a botanist who propagates king cherries, wants “to see Yoshino cherries go away.”

Japanese Cherry Blossoms Ruffle South Korea

This article is by John Yoon, Mike Ives and Hisako Ueno.

GYEONGJU, South Korea — Shin Joon Hwan, an ecologist, walked along a road lined with cherry trees on the verge of blooming last week, examining the fine hairs around their dark red buds.

The flowers in Gyeongju, South Korea, an ancient capital, belong

**Push for Native Variety
Over Colonial Type**

to a common Japanese variety called the Yoshino, or Tokyo cherry. Mr. Shin’s advocacy group wants to replace those trees with a kind that it insists is native to South Korea, called the king

cherry.

“These are Japanese trees that are growing here, in the land of our ancestors,” said Mr. Shin, 67, a former director of South Korea’s national arboretum.

Mr. Shin’s nascent project, with a few dozen members, is the latest wrinkle in a complex debate over the origins of South Korea’s cherry trees. The science has

Continued on Page A5



BUSINESS B1-6
Solar Leader Is Now Lagging
German manufacturers are caught between China’s low prices and U.S. protectionist policies. *PAGE B1*

Facing Wrath of Censors
The filmmaker Wang Xiaoshuai is among the few Chinese artists who won’t bend to state limitations. *PAGE B1*

INTERNATIONAL A4-9
New England to Notre-Dame
Hank Silver, a carpenter from Massachusetts, is among a handful of foreigners helping to rebuild the Paris cathedral. The Saturday Profile. *PAGE A4*

Airstrikes Kill Dozens in Syria
Multiple targets were hit in what appeared to be one of the heaviest Israeli attacks in the country in years. *PAGE A6*

SPORTS B7-10
They’re Crazy for Clark
The Iowa basketball star is a role model in the state who has girls rushing to take the court. *PAGE B7*



ARTS C1-6
A Tradition Under Pressure
St. Thomas Church in New York may close its boarding school for choristers, one of only a few in the world. *PAGE C1*

To the Beat of His Own Album
After decades of playing for artists like Nick Cave and PJ Harvey, the drummer Jim White has gone solo. *PAGE C1*

NATIONAL A10-19, 22
Heart Pump Tied to 49 Deaths
The Food and Drug Administration faulted the device’s maker for delayed notice of mounting complications, citing reports that use of the pump perforated the walls of the heart. *PAGE A17*

Political Fight Over Pipeline
The battle over Line 5 in Michigan and Wisconsin could have sweeping implications for the power of states to regulate, and the issues raised are bound to surface in the election. *PAGE A10*

OPINION A20-21
Tressie McMillan Cottom *PAGE A21*



OBITUARIES B11-12
A Drill Sergeant Who Cared
Louis Gossett Jr. was the first Black performer to win a best supporting actor Oscar, for “An Officer and a Gentleman” in 1983. He was 87. *PAGE B11*



0 354613 9