

Latest spate of T repairs puzzles some rail experts

Agency blames weather as Eng warns of occasional slowdowns down the track

By Shannon Larson
GLOBE STAFF

MBTA riders are getting ready to pop the champagne. Come Dec. 21, after more than a year riding shuttle buses, juggling alternate ways to work, and grumbling, riders can rejoice that the work repairing slow zones that have disrupted their daily commutes will be a thing of the past.

But this doesn't mean it's going to be smooth high-speed sailing from here out. If anything, T general manager Phil Eng wants to set some realistic expectations for riders: Issues with tracks will emerge now and again and will require temporary disruptions and slow zones while workers fix them.

Such was the case at the end of last month when some Red Line riders were startled to experience a speed restriction only days after the T said the line was free of slow zones for the first time in more than two decades. Then another speed restriction popped up on Monday. And another on Wednesday.

"If a speed restriction next year comes up, we're committed to taking care of them timely and promptly because we're not going to let ourselves and let the system fall back into the state that it was," Eng said, referring to the long stretches where train speeds were dramatically reduced.

As Eng has underscored from the beginning, the ambitious initiative aimed at replacing every degraded rail and tie has been a massive (and costly) undertaking designed to correct decades of ne-

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Charges come at crucial time for judiciary

Joseph accused of bringing 'disrepute' to the bench by aiding immigrant suspect

By Sean Cotter
GLOBE STAFF

New disciplinary charges against Judge Shelley M. Richmond Joseph, who's accused of helping an immigrant evade federal agents in her Newton courtroom in 2018, are a strikingly aggressive step that experts say will signal to judges that they should not interfere in political matters like immigration, which will move to the fore under the new Trump administration.

"The smallest thing that a judge does that suggests they're not neutral is dangerous," said Jack Lu, a retired Superior Court judge who works as an adjunct professor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. "In this business, credibility is important. It does matter. You can't do stuff like this. It damages the perception of the judiciary."

Last week, the state Commission on Judicial Conduct announced it had filed disciplinary charges against Joseph before the Supreme Judicial Court, alleging she brought "disrepute" to the judicial system. According to the commission, Joseph

JOSEPH, Page A5



LOUAI BESHARA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Syrians celebrated at Umayyad Square in Damascus on Sunday after Islamist-led rebels declared that they have taken the capital city in a lightning offensive, forcing longtime dictator Bashar Assad to escape to Moscow.

A stunning Syria shake-up

As nation convulses and Assad flees, concerns mix with celebrations

By Kareem Fahim, Mohamad El Chamaa,
and Loveday Morris

WASHINGTON POST

ISTANBUL — President Bashar Assad, Syria's autocratic ruler, was ousted Sunday after a quarter century in power, toppled after an Islamist rebel offensive that hurtled through Syrian cities and towns, and finally Damascus, the capital and once-feared seat of Assad's power, which fell with little sign of a fight.

The Syrian leader, the scion of a family that ruled Syria for more than half a century, vanished in silence Sunday, abandoned by allies and friends. It fell to Russia, Assad's longtime military benefactor, to announce his resignation and flight from Syria. Assad went to Moscow, Russia's state news agency said.

If Assad's exit was quiet, the gatherings to mark his ouster Sunday were cacophonous, erupting in Damascus and other Syrian towns with celebratory gunfire. Joyous rallies were held by Syrians in exile, in Istanbul and elsewhere. At the border between Lebanon and Syria, people sang, set off fireworks, and burned banknotes bearing Assad's face.

"There was a nightmare and it's gone," said Mohammed al-Azham, 37, from Hama, the second city to fall in the rout by the rebel forces led by Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

In darker but more poignant rituals, rebel fighters freed thousands of traumatized inmates from Syrian prisons, facilities whose names alone conjured horror, including Sednaya and the Syrian military's Palestine Branch.

On Sunday morning, Syrian state television — which only hours

SYRIA, Page A7



MUHAMMAD HAJ KADOUR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Displaced Syrians broke into tears as they returned on Sunday to the central Syrian city of Homs.

Caution in the US

The Biden administration both launched airstrikes and worked behind the scenes to ensure the Islamic State group had no role in a new Syria. **A7.**

A range of emotions

Syrians in Boston greeted the fall of the Assad regime with shock and celebration. **B1.**

Unplugging the Storrow Dr. of the Great North

Vt. officials tout way to avoid stuck trucks in Smugglers' Notch

By Kevin Cullen
GLOBE STAFF

STOWE, Vt. — In the perpetual battle over how to stop trucks and buses from getting stuck in the narrow, rocky outcroppings of Smugglers' Notch along one of the most

scenic roads in New England, Vermont officials think they've found a way to win the war: chicanes.

Chicanes are curb extensions typically used to discourage speeding by forcing vehicles to follow a curving, S-shaped path. In the case of the iconic Smuggler's Notch road, the chicanes are a combination of plastic barrels and rubber curbing that are fashioned to mimic the hairpin curves that snare trucks and buses like a spider web traps flies.

If a vehicle is too long or bulky to navigate its way through the chicanes, then its driver is expected to turn around.

"Don't fit here? You won't fit ahead," a yellow warning sign reads.

The 3.5-mile stretch of Route 108 that rises and falls on the side of Mount Mansfield is a sometimes steep, twisting road connecting Stowe and Cambridge and the resorts at both ends. In mountainous terrain,

NOTCH ROAD, Page A10

Open drug use, homelessness dim Nubian Square hopes

'It's progressively gotten worse. Both of my sons, they come to the shop every day and they see it. Unfortunately, it's normalized.'

PAMELA LEINS (right),
barbershop owner in
Nubian Square

By Dan Glaun
GLOBE STAFF

They envision it as Boston's Black Wall Street. In Roxbury, several Black developers, many with long-standing ties to the neighborhood, have laid out visions to restore Nubian Square to its mid-20th century commercial heights, and have launched an array of projects to revamp the neighborhood's faded commercial facades: cafes, grocery stores, bars and clubs, mixed-use housing, and the relocation of the Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology.

But business owners there say they have also seen a spike in the twin problems of homelessness and open-air drug use in recent months, a problem they attribute in part to people who relocated to Nubian Square after the city cleared out tent encampments at the area known as Mass. and Cass a year ago.

At a community safety meeting last month, barbershop owner Pamela Leins described harassment, catcalling, and occasional fights that have unnerved her and deterred customers.

"It's progressively gotten worse," said Leins, who

NUBIAN SQUARE, Page A5



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Nubian Square business owners have seen a spike in homelessness and open-air drug use. Above, Pamela Leins, owner of In the Cut barbershop.

President-elect Donald Trump, in an expansive interview, pledged to quickly crack down on immigration, threatened to lock up political foes such as Liz Cheney, and urged Russia to seek a cease-fire in Ukraine. **A2 and A4.**

The Red Sox won't win the Juan Soto sweepstakes, as the Mets have reportedly signed the superstar in a \$765 million deal. **C1.**



Little drab will do

Monday: Clouds, rain late. High 41-46, low 38-43
Tuesday: Drizzly early. High 42-47, low 39-44.
Sunrise: 7:02. Sunset: 4:11.
High tides: 5:06, 5:26.
Weather and comics, **D4-5.**
Obituaries, **C9.**

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