

Drug ring probed in star’s death

Crackdown may come after arrests in Perry case. But is ketamine ‘a valuable medicine’?

BY BRITTNY MEJIA AND CONNOR SHEETS

They called her “the Ketamine Queen.”

Jasveen Sangha, authorities say, would sell ketamine — aka “Dr. Pepper” — in unmarked clear glass vials and tout it over Signal messages as high quality. She allegedly called her source “master chef” and “scientist.”

“She only deal[s] with high end celebs,” someone in her network allegedly texted a potential buyer. “If it were not great stuff she’d lose her business.”

One of Sangha’s most famous customers, federal prosecutors alleged Thursday, was Matthew Perry. Authorities say she sold about 50 vials of the drug to the actor for \$11,000 — including the batch that led to his Oct. 28 death at 54.

U.S. Atty. Martin Estrada said an investigation had uncovered “a broad underground criminal network” responsible for distributing large quantities of ketamine to Perry and others. He announced charges against five people, including Sangha, 41, and two doctors, tied to Perry’s death.

They are facing an array of charges, including distribution of drugs resulting in death, according to an indictment unsealed Thursday.

Ketamine, a legal medication commonly used as an anesthetic, has gained popularity in recent years as both a clinical treatment for depression and a recreational drug. But Perry’s death and the arrests that followed have raised questions about whether a crackdown is looming.

“I think what you’ve seen is that this is not the beginning but a continuation of an enforcement effort against synthetic drugs of all kinds,” Estrada said.

Estrada referenced the opioid fentanyl, which has fueled an epidemic of overdoses, and said authorities are “on a campaign to address this and send a message that if you sell drugs that result in the death of another person, the consequences will be severe.”

Across the country, the use of ketamine has boomed, something medical

[See Perry, A9]



A RIDER at the Cherry County Rodeo in Valentine, Neb., the town where Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz grew up. Walz, the Democratic nominee for vice president, speaks fondly of his hometown and its values.

In hometown, folks like Walz the man more than his politics

VP nominee grew up in rural Nebraska, where voters are heavily conservative



WALZ assailed Donald Trump’s labor record when he addressed the AFSCME annual convention in Los Angeles this week.

BY HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS

VALENTINE, Neb. — Mayor Kyle Arganbright steered his dusty diesel truck through this ranching town, past the rodeo grounds and livestock auction, and pointed out the football field of the Valentine High School Badgers, whose roster once included a teenage Tim Walz.

Next up: the quiet, tree-lined street where the Walz family once lived.

After Walz, the Minnesota governor, was named Vice President Kamala Harris’ running mate, reporters descended on his hometown of Valentine, population 2,600.

“Now I’m the local Tim Walz tour guide. Write that on the list of things I never thought I’d do,” Arganbright said with a laugh as a fishing rod, stretching from the back seat, rattled on his dashboard.

[See Walz, A7]

Ozempic alternatives cheaper, riskier

Shortage of drug is driving consumers to compounded versions not approved by FDA.

BY ANDREA CHANG

When Tina Jacobson tried to get Ozempic to lose weight, her health insurance provider denied coverage because she was not diabetic.

Instead of paying more than \$1,000 out of pocket for the Type 2 diabetes drug, which lowers blood sugar

levels and suppresses appetite, the Florida real estate agent turned to a clinic that prescribed her a cheaper alternative.

The compounded version, made by a specialized pharmacy using semaglutide — the active ingredient in Ozempic — cost \$350 a month. The 5-foot-7-inch Jacobson began taking it last summer when she weighed nearly 200 pounds; by January, she had lost 50 pounds.

“I know a couple people who are doing Ozempic and Wegovy,” said Jacobson, 52, referring to another

semaglutide-based drug that patients are using to shed pounds quickly. “But for the most part, pretty much everyone I’ve talked to is on a compound.”

As a game-changing new class of injectable diabetes and obesity drugs surges in popularity, widespread shortages and steep prices for brand-name GLP-1 drugs — which also include Mounjaro and Zepbound — have persisted, pushing droves of weight-loss hopefuls into a booming, less regulated secondary market for copies that are more affordable and readily available online.

Compounded drugs, as they are called, are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, meaning the agency does not verify their safety, effectiveness or quality. Although compounded forms serve an important role in the pharmaceutical industry, there are also risks — concerns that have grown in the Ozempic era as telehealth startups, med spas and online pharmacies proliferate, eager to get in on the craze.

“We urge patients to be vigilant,” said a spokesperson for the FDA, which

[See Ozempic, A9]

Will global warming turn L.A.’s climate into San Bernardino’s?

BY HAYLEY SMITH

Imagine it’s a Saturday morning in Santa Monica in the year 2080. You brew your coffee, open your front door and breathe in the hot, dry air of ... San Bernardino?

That’s the potential future if climate change continues unabated, according to a new mapping tool from researchers at the University of Maryland Center

for Environmental Science. The tool draws direct lines between an area’s projected climate in 60 years and the places that are experiencing that climate today.

The map is a “really interesting way to communicate to people the magnitude of climate change that we’re expecting,” said Matt Fitzpatrick, the tool’s creator and a professor of global change ecology.

He noted that sometimes

warnings about global warming — such as international 1.5-degree Celsius limits, or predictions that Earth will be 5 degrees Fahrenheit warmer by the end of the century — can feel distant or hard to grasp.

“These analyses were a way to really bring it home to people,” Fitzpatrick said. “It’s a way to translate these abstract numbers into something that’s a lot more

[See Warming, A6]



AN ARID landscape is seen outside a defunct school in the San Bernardino County community of Amboy.

BALLOT ISSUE TO CURB CRIME FAVORED

State voters in poll back stiffer penalties for theft and fentanyl offenses in Prop. 36.

BY MACKENZIE MAYS

SACRAMENTO — A majority of likely California voters support stiffer penalties for crimes involving theft and fentanyl, according to a new UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll co-sponsored by The Times.

The results of the poll released Friday showed that 56% of Californians would support Proposition 36, an initiative on the November ballot that would impose stricter sentences for repetitive theft and offenses involving the deadly drug fentanyl.

The proposition has been at the center of a battle in the state Capitol this year as Republicans and law enforcement advocates call for the undoing of Democratic reform policies that downgraded some felonies to misdemeanors, which they blame for an increase in organized retail theft and “smash and grab” robberies.

The poll also gauges how voters feel about initiatives designed to respond to California’s high cost of living. According to the poll, a majority of likely voters support a measure to increase the state minimum wage to \$18 per hour, though those surveyed were more divided over a measure that would embolden local governments to expand rent control but still lean toward “yes.”

The broad support for Proposition 36, the tough-on-crime measure, comes as Gov. Gavin Newsom and state Democrats try to balance frustrations about crime among Californians with criminal justice reform goals that voters once supported.

The initiative aims to overhaul parts of Proposition 47, a measure

[See Poll, A6]

12-year sentence for \$51 donation

U.S.-Russian woman from L.A. is convicted in Russia over money she sent to charity for Ukraine. **WORLD, A3**

President touts lower drug costs

Biden says lower prices that were negotiated for 10 popular medications will take effect in 2026. **NATION, A5**

Officials wary of digital price tags

Senators voice concern that electronic labels, which can be quickly updated, could lead to gouging. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather
Sunny and warm.
L.A. Basin: 90/66. **B6**

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