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DJIA 39512.13 ▲ 401.37 1.0% NASDAQ 16369.41 ▲ 1.3% STOXX 600 505.21 ▼ 0.004% 10-YR. TREAS. ▲ 6/32, yield 4.271% OIL \$81.68 ▼ \$1.79 GOLD \$2,157.90 ▲ \$1.60 EURO \$1.0923 YEN 151.25

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **The stock market** rose to new highs when a narrow majority of Fed officials reaffirmed projections to cut interest rates three times this year despite firmer-than-anticipated inflation in recent months. **A1**

◆ **The S&P 500 closed up** 0.9% to 5224.62, while the Nasdaq and Dow gained 1.3% and 1%, respectively. **B11**

◆ **The U.S. granted Intel** up to \$8.5 billion to help fund new chip plants in four states, the largest award yet in an effort to revive American chip-making overseen by the Biden administration. **A2**

◆ **Private-equity firm** Apollo made an \$11 billion offer to buy Paramount Global's film and TV studio, according to people familiar with the situation. **B1**

◆ **Meta, Microsoft, X** and Match filed a legal petition protesting Apple's app store policies, objecting to how Apple complied with a court ruling ordering it to allow alternative payment methods. **B1**

◆ **Trump's supporters** are pushing to hand him a nearly \$3.5 billion windfall by driving up the value of his social-media platform, which is on the cusp of getting approval to list on the stock market. **B1**

◆ **Reddit priced its** initial public offering at the high end of its targeted range, a sign that investor enthusiasm for new issues could be returning. **B1**

◆ **Boeing's top finance** executive warned that the company's production problems would result in a steep hit to its cash flow this quarter. **B3**

◆ **Tencent reported** worse-than-expected results for the fourth quarter as it navigated a slowing economy. **B2**

World-Wide

◆ **The Biden** administration enacted the strictest rules for tailpipe emissions so far, but gave the auto industry more time to comply, recognizing that the transition to electric cars will take longer than hoped. **A1**

◆ **Israeli security officials** are quietly developing a plan to distribute aid in the Gaza Strip that could eventually create a Palestinian-led governing authority there, Israeli and Arab officials said, causing a fierce backlash from Hamas and dividing Israel's war cabinet. **A1**

◆ **Legal turmoil over** a Texas plan to arrest and deport migrants left state and border residents confused about whether the law would be allowed to take effect. **A3**

◆ **Biden's campaign** in February brought in more than \$53 million, leaving it with more than \$155 million on hand at the end of the month, while Trump's operation raised \$39.3 million, with \$74.4 million in the bank. **A4**

◆ **House Speaker** Mike Johnson indicated that he wanted to move ahead quickly with legislation to avoid a government shutdown this weekend, ignoring some of his GOP critics. **A4**

◆ **Shipping executive** Angela Chao had nearly three times the legal limit of alcohol in her system when she drove a Tesla into a pond and drowned in Texas, a law-enforcement report said. **A3**

◆ **A new skin test** can detect an abnormal protein that people with Parkinson's have inside their nerves, allowing doctors to diagnose the disease before symptoms appear. **A7**

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Fed Sees Three Rate Cuts in '24

Stocks prices surge after officials affirm policy stance despite hotter inflation data

By NICK TIMIRAOS

The stock market rose to new highs Wednesday when a narrow majority of Federal Reserve officials reaffirmed projections to cut interest rates three times this year despite firmer-than-anticipated inflation in recent months.

While the latest data hadn't given officials the confidence they would need to begin rate

cuts, Chair Jerome Powell said his outlook for inflation to continue declining hadn't changed substantially in recent weeks. The projections released Wednesday were little-changed from December and showed most of his colleagues expect two or three cuts this year.

The central bank held steady its benchmark federal-funds rate in a range between 5.25% and 5.5%, a 23-year high.

Some investors had braced for the Fed to dial back expectations of rate cuts and cheered the more optimistic scenario laid out by policymakers. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq

Composite all closed at a record high for the first time since November 2021, shortly before the Fed pivoted toward much tighter policy.

Expectations that the Fed would cut rates by June rose to around 75% in futures markets later Wednesday, up from closer to 50% earlier this week, according to CME Group.

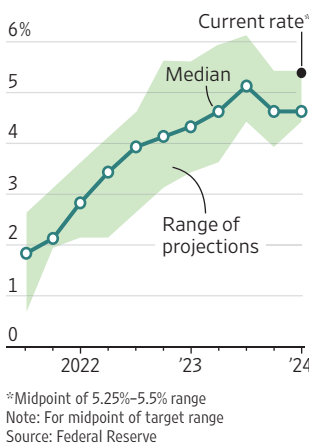
The projections and Powell's comments left a clear impression that the central bank

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◆ **James Mackintosh: Economy left some in the dust.....** B1

◆ **Stocks rally on the Fed rate-cut plan.....** B11

Federal-funds rate target projections for the end of 2024



'Don't Look at Me With Your Disturbing Eyes'



ROMAN SHADE: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni hid her face on Wednesday in Parliament after the Green Party's Angelo Bonelli told her, 'Don't look at me with your disturbing eyes,' during an exchange over the war in Gaza.

Cash Crunch Imperils Hospital Chain

Steward struggles with unpaid bills, postponed surgeries and a bat infestation

By MELANIE EVANS AND JONATHAN WEIL

Last spring, a nurse found a live bat clinging to a curtain in the intensive-care unit of Florida's Rockledge Regional Medical Center.

Steward Health Care System, which operates the hospital, brought in a pest-control company, which discovered another 3,000 or so Brazilian free-tailed and evening bats in the building. "That's been a known issue," said retired nurse Vonnay Norbury, who used to see bats in the hospital's stairwell.

The hospital evacuated the floor, and the bat-removal workers came in. Last fall, Rentokil North America sued Steward for \$1.6 million of allegedly unpaid bills, including \$936,320 for the bat removal.

Steward, which operates 31 hospitals in eight states, is in a deep cash crunch. At its Florida hospitals, vendors who haven't been paid have stopped delivering artificial knees and other supplies, causing some surgeries to be postponed. Garbage collectors cut off one hospital there over unpaid bills, causing trash to

pile up and state regulators to issue a warning. Traveling nurses left jobs at Steward hospitals after the temporary agency that dispatched them said it hadn't been paid.

This isn't a good way to run a hospital company. Suppliers who haven't already cut off Steward routinely demand cash up front. Every Tuesday, the heads of Steward's eight Florida hospitals join a call with Daniel Knell, its top executive in the state, to request the cash and supplies needed to get through another

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Israel Seeks To Foster Alternative To Hamas

Israeli security officials are quietly developing a plan to distribute aid in the Gaza Strip that could eventually create a Palestinian-led gov-

By Summer Said in Dubai, Dov Lieber in Tel Aviv and Benoit Faucon in Doha, Qatar

erning authority there, Israeli and Arab officials said, causing a fierce backlash from Hamas and creating divisions in Israel's war cabinet.

A top Israeli defense official has held talks with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan to build regional support for an emerging effort to enlist Palestinian leaders and businessmen who have no links to Hamas—a U.S.-designated terrorist organization—in distributing aid, some of the officials said.

The aid would enter by land and sea after Israeli inspection and would head to large warehouses in central

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INSIDE



NICK STEWART/ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUSINESS & FINANCE
Trump stands to reap a \$3.5 billion windfall as supporters drive up SPAC's value. **B1**



MARK HERTZBERG/ZUMA PRESS

PERSONAL JOURNAL
New technology and a patchwork of policies are complicating airport security. **A11**

Love Across Continents: Young Couples Find Unlikely Cupid

* * *

Users of Discord app unexpectedly meet romantic partners; chats lead to travel

By SALVADOR RODRIGUEZ

Like many young couples, Katie Kelbe and Ben Croitor play videogames and watch TV shows together, including "Game of Thrones," "Succession" and "The Bear."

He lives in Stuttgart, Germany. She lives in Birmingham, Ala. They met by chance

on Discord, an app where Kelbe, 27, bumped into Croitor, 22, on a forum for fans of musician John Mayer.

Kelbe and Croitor are part of a crowd of young adults on Discord who are unexpectedly finding partners who live hundreds or thousands of miles away. The app draws 200 million

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Purchasing a Home This Spring Becomes Even More Chaotic

By NICOLE FRIEDMAN AND VERONICA DAGHER

Holly Frew's timetable for buying a home just moved up. Frew had been casually looking for a bigger place in Atlanta to live with her 2-year-old daughter for months. Now she feels pressure to buy before July because of the possibility that new rules regarding how real-estate agents get paid could mean she has to pay a buyer's agent a stand-alone fee, raising her upfront costs.

"It's confusing and we don't know how it's all going to shake out," said Frew, a single mother who works in communications at Georgia State University and was already grappling with inflated food prices and high daycare costs that made saving for a down payment difficult. Under the current system, the buyer's agent's commission is usually baked into the sale price, allowing the buyer to finance that cost as part of a mortgage. The U.S.'s stressful spring

Carmakers Get More Time to Phase Out Gas Engine

Rules for tailpipe emissions, while strict, will kick in more gradually

By MIKE COLIAS

The Biden administration enacted the strictest-ever rules for tailpipe emissions but handed the auto industry a significant concession by giving them more time to comply, a recognition that the transition to electric cars will take longer than hoped.

The rules released by the Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday ratchet up more gradually than regulators originally proposed, pushing the car industry toward majority EV sales by early next decade. That decision is to allow time for U.S. consumers to warm to EVs, as more chargers get installed and automakers work to develop supply chains and more-affordable electric models.

Auto executives and dealers lobbied hard for a slower implementation as the pace of U.S. EV sales decelerates after a burst of enthusiasm in recent years. The less-aggressive roll-out of the rules is a win for automakers, which cautioned President Biden that the EPA targets proposed a year ago—to effectively require that fully electric cars account for about 60% of new-vehicle sales by the 2030 model year—would get ahead of consumers.

The rules apply to light-duty vehicles—cars, sport-utility vehicles and most pickups—for model years 2027 through 2032. It governs how much heat-trapping carbon dioxide new vehicles can emit, as well as pollutants like nitrogen oxides, which cause smog.

To hit the targets for model year 2030, an estimated 31% to 44% of new light-vehicle sales would need to be electric, rather than the 60% mark originally proposed. The total percentage would depend on the level of tailpipe pollutants from the rest of the vehicles sold, which would be a combination of gas-electric hybrids and gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles.

The targets in the earlier years are easier to meet than what the EPA initially proposed, in April 2023. The agency considered feedback from automakers, parts suppliers, dealers

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home-selling season just became even more chaotic, after the National Association of Realtors agreed last week to a settlement of legal claims that the industry conspired to keep agent commissions high.

As part of the settlement, NAR agreed to get rid of a longstanding rule that required many home sellers to say how much they would pay a home buyer's agent. Consumer groups had argued that the arrangement effectively prevented buyers from negotiating with agents to save money, and kept commissions in the U.S. higher than most of the world, typically at 5% to 6% of the total sales price.

The new rules, which go into effect in mid-July, are prompting buyers and sellers to question whether they should rush to do deals before the changes or wait to

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◆ **Housing starts top outlook in February.....** B11