

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, mostly sunny, breezy, high 54.
Tonight, clear skies, dry conditions,
low 42. **Tomorrow**, sunny to partly
cloudy, breezy, seasonable, high 49.
Weather map appears on Page A24.

VOL. CLXXIII No. 59,981 © 2023 The New York Times Company THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2023 Prices in Canada may be higher \$4.00



Lea Yanai, a professional dancer whose sister Moran Stela Yanai is being held in Gaza, during a ballet tribute Wednesday in Tel Aviv.

5 Frantic Days: Inside a Battle To Run OpenAI

This article is by Cade Metz, Tripp Mickle, Mike Isaac, Karen Weise and Kevin Roose.

SAN FRANCISCO — One of the strangest episodes in the history of the tech industry ended as start-up events often do: with a party in San Francisco’s eclectic Mission District.

Late Tuesday, OpenAI said Sam Altman was returning as its chief executive, five days after the artificial intelligence start-up’s board of directors forced him out. At the company’s San Francisco office, giddy employees snacked on chicken tenders, drank boba tea and champagne, and celebrated Mr. Altman’s return deep into the night.

Mr. Altman’s reinstatement capped a corporate drama that mixed piles of money, a pressure campaign from allies, intense media attention and a steadfast belief among some in the A.I. community that they should proceed with caution with what they are building.

Now OpenAI, which for two days appeared to be on the brink of collapse just a year after introducing the popular ChatGPT chatbot, will replace a heavily criticized board of directors with a more traditional group including former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers and a former executive from the software giant Salesforce.

More board members, who could be plucked from OpenAI’s biggest investor, Microsoft, and the A.I. research community, are expected to join soon. Mr. Altman was not named to the board on Tuesday night, and it was not

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Sam Altman was reinstated by the OpenAI board late Tuesday.

Assisted-Living Fees Pile Up, as Do the Profits

By JORDAN RAU

Assisted-living centers have become an appealing retirement option for hundreds of thousands of boomers who can no longer live independently, promising a cheerful alternative to the institutional feel of a nursing home.

But their cost is so crushingly high that most Americans can’t afford them.

These highly profitable facilities often charge \$5,000 a month or more and then layer on extra fees at every step. Residents’ bills and price lists from a dozen facilities offer a glimpse of the charges: \$12 for a blood pressure check; \$50 per injection (more for insulin); \$93 a month to order medica-

DYING BROKE
No Service Left Unbilled

tions from a pharmacy not used by the facility; \$315 a month for daily help with an inhaler.

The facilities charge extra to help residents get to the shower, bathroom or dining room; to deliver meals to their rooms; to have staff check-ins for daily “reassurance” or simply to remind residents when it’s time to eat or take their medication. Some even charge for routine billing to a resident’s insurance for care.

“They say, ‘Your mother forgot one time to take her medications and so now you’ve got to add this on and we’re billing you for it,’”

said Lori Smetanka, executive director of the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, a nonprofit.

About 850,000 older Americans reside in assisted-living facilities, which have become one of the most lucrative branches of the long-term care industry catering to people 65 and older. Investors, regional companies and international real estate trusts have jumped in: Half of operators in the business of assisted living earn returns of 20 percent or more than it costs to run the sites, an industry survey shows. That is far higher than the money made in most other health sectors.

Rents are often rived or ex-

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Giant Balloons Floating Through a City. What Could Go Wrong?

By WINNIE HU

It has become Paul Schwartz’s job to help ensure the safety of millions of Thanksgiving parade watchers — as New York City’s “chief balloon officer.”

Mr. Schwartz, whose actual job is deputy commissioner of bridges, has earned the unofficial title from his colleagues because he leads a team of city transportation engineers who clear the floating behemoths in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade for takeoff.

The engineers have gathered detailed calculations on how high each of the 16 giant balloons this year — including the Pillsbury Doughboy and Kung Fu Panda’s Po — can safely go at various wind speeds. Over the course of several hours, they put the newest balloons through test runs at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey to try to head off problems. And on parade day, they will spread out along the route with anemometers to monitor weather conditions in real time.

Mr. Schwartz, 43, and his crew are part of a huge behind-the-scenes operation by city and Macy’s officials to ensure that the lumbering giant balloons glide safely through the congested parade route in Manhattan. The parade, a tradition for nearly a century, marks for many the start of the holiday season, drawing crowds of visitors from around the world and generating millions of dollars for local businesses.

Two months before the parade, workers from a half-dozen city agencies walk the route, making a list of hundreds of potential ob-



Preparations for the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade include testing the balloons weeks before.

structions that could puncture or snag balloons. Then they get to work clearing the streets, from turning traffic lights and signs out of the way to removing light poles and bike racks.

The painstaking preparations were put in place after wind gusts blew chaos into the 1997 parade. A six-story-high Cat in the Hat balloon struck part of a lamppost at West 72nd Street and Central Park West, injuring four people.

Since then, city officials have worked with Macy’s to adopt more stringent safety measures, including requiring the balloons, which are held by handlers on the ground, to also be anchored to vehicles.

Still, in 2005 an M&M’s balloon swung out of control from sudden wind bursts and hit a light pole in Times Square, injuring two people. After that, city officials mandated anemometers — instru-

CEASE-FIRE TIMING UNCLEAR AS SIDES WORK OUT DETAILS

Agonizing Wait in Israel and Gaza Over Who Will Be Freed, and When

This article is by Patrick Kingsley, Ronen Bergman and Hiba Yazbek.

JERUSALEM — A four-day cease-fire between Israel and Hamas — the first extended break in almost seven weeks of war — will most likely not begin until Friday at the earliest, Israeli officials said on Wednesday night, as negotiators hammered out details of an agreement between Israel and Hamas that would pause the fighting to allow the release of hostages and Palestinian prisoners.

The timing for the releases, which may also not begin until Friday, was released in a statement issued by the National Security Council through the Israeli prime minister’s office, and appeared to rule out the possibility that hostages could be freed on Thursday, as many of their families had hoped.

The timing on the cease-fire was disclosed by an Israeli official who spoke on the condition of anonymity about the highly sensitive issue.

The new information underscored the fluidity of the negotiations between Israel and Hamas, which are being mediated by Qatar. Earlier Wednesday, Moussa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official, told Al Jazeera from Qatar that his group had agreed to a temporary cease-fire starting at 10 a.m. local time on Thursday, and an Israeli official had set out the same timing.

The two sides announced Wednesday morning — Tuesday evening in the United States — that they had agreed to the exchange and a pause in fighting, but spent much of the day working out tricky details about timing and methods. In an atmosphere of deep mutual mistrust, with a history of collapsed truces and with-

out an intermediary attempting to keep peace on the ground, Palestinians and Israelis alike worried that the deal might yet fall through.

The deal calls for the release of at least 150 Palestinian women and teenagers jailed by Israel in exchange for at least 50 women and minors taken hostage during the Hamas assault in Israel on Oct. 7. Israel said its warplanes would not fly over southern Gaza for the duration of the cease-fire, and would not fly over the northern part of the territory for six hours each day.

But as if to highlight that there was no lull in the war yet, the Israeli military said on Wednesday that it “continued to fight in the Gaza Strip,” while Hamas said it had agreed to a truce, but “our hands will remain on the trigger.”

The Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity said hostages turned over by Hamas would be taken to hospitals, the seriously injured by helicopter. Those under 12 will be met at the border by their families, the official said, while older ones will meet their families at hospitals, where they will be debriefed by security services.

The Israeli government has said that the hostages would be freed in four groups during the truce, each with at least 10 people. Israeli news media reported that the country’s spy service, Mossad, had the names of those set to be released in the first group, but would not notify their families until they had been recovered.

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BIDEN’S REQUEST Israel is urged to set up safe areas in Gaza during the pause in fighting. PAGE A8

Bracing for ’24 As Threats Rise In Election Jobs

By MICHAEL WINES

For the people who run elections at thousands of local offices nationwide, 2024 was never going to be an easy year. But the recent anonymous mailing of powder-filled envelopes to election offices in five states offers new hints of how hard it could be.

The letters, sent to offices in Washington State, Oregon, Nevada, California and Georgia this month, are under investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the F.B.I. Several of them appear to have been laced with fentanyl; at least two contained a vague message calling to “end elections now.”

The letters are a public indicator of what some election officials say is a fresh rise in threats to their safety and the functioning of the election system. And they presage the pressure-cooker environment that election officials will face next year in a contest for the White House that could chart the future course of American democracy.

“The system is going to be tested in every possible way, whether it’s voter registration, applications for ballots, poll workers, the mail, drop boxes, election results websites,” said Tammy Patrick, chief executive for programs at the National Association of Election Officials. “Every way in which our elections are administered is going to be tested some-

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Fatal Crash at Canadian Border
A speeding car that hit a median before taking flight and bursting into flames killed two, and shut down bridges and cross-border train travel. PAGE A19

Doctors Divided on Death
A new technique in retrieving hearts from organ donors has ignited a debate on the surprisingly blurry line between life and death in a hospital. PAGE A10

A Law Long Under Attack
A federal ruling this week was only the latest legal challenge to the Voting Rights Act, which has shored up Black Americans’ political power. PAGE A18

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