



Fewer in U.S. turn to food banks, but millions still in need

By ASHRAF KHALIL

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunger and food insecurity across the United States have dropped measurably over the past six months, but the need remains far above pre-pandemic levels. And specialists in hunger issues warn that the situation for millions of families remains extremely fragile. An Associated Press review of bulk distribution numbers from hundreds of food banks across the country revealed a clear downward trend in the amount of food handed out across the country, starting in the spring as the COVID-19 vaccine rollout took hold and closed sectors of the economy began to reopen.

"It's come down, but it's still elevated," said Katie Fitzgerald, COO of Feeding America, a nonprofit organization that coordinates the efforts of more than 200 food banks across

the country and that provided the AP with the national distribution numbers. She warned that despite the recent decreases, the amount of food being distributed by Feeding America's partner food banks remained more than 55% above pre-pandemic levels. "We're worried (food insecurity) could increase all over again if too many shoes drop," she said. Those potential setbacks include the advance of the delta variant of the coronavirus, which has already delayed planned returns to the office for millions of employees and which could threaten school closures and other shutdowns as the nation enters the winter flu season. Other obstacles include the gradual expiration of several COVID-19-specific protections such as the eviction moratorium and expanded unemployment benefits.

All told, families facing food



The warehouse for The Capital Area Food Bank is seen by a fleet of trucks, Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

insecurity find themselves still dependent on outside assistance and extremely vulnerable to unforeseen difficulties.

"There are people going back to work, but it's slow going and God forbid you should need a car repair or something," said Carmen

Cumberland, president of Community Harvest Food Bank in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Continued on next page

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Continued from Front

Nationally, the food banks that work with Feeding America saw a 31% increase in the amount of food distributed in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020, just before the global pandemic reached America. When the nationwide closures of offices and schools began in March 2020, the impact was immediate. Feeding America-affiliated food banks distributed 1.1 billion pounds of food in the first quarter on 2020; in the second quarter, the number jumped 42% to more than 1.6 billion pounds. The third quarter saw a smaller 5% increase up to nearly 1.7 billion pounds of food. While distributions declined from the end of 2020 to the first quarter of 2021, recent data suggests that the decline has leveled off.

The national data is mirrored in the experiences of individual food banks across the country. At the Alameda County Community Food Bank in Oakland, California, the level of community need spiked in winter and early spring of this year. In February 2021, the organization set a record with 5 million pounds of food distributed. That record stood for one month as March 2021 saw 6 million pounds distributed. After the March peak, the numbers started dropping steadily — down to 4.6 million pounds in August 2021. But that's still compared with 2.7 million pounds in June 2019.

"The recovery is going to be very, very long and steep for families who are typically reliant on food banks," said Michael Altfest, the food bank's director of community engagement. Altfest said the coronavirus pandemic was an additional trauma for families already suffering from food insecurity, and



Volunteers pack boxes of food for distribution, at The Capital Area Food Bank, Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

it introduced a whole new category of client who had never used food banks before but had been pushed over the financial edge by the pandemic. Both categories are projected to remain in need of assistance well into next year.

"Things are not getting any easier here for low- and moderate-income households, and we don't expect it to for a while," Altfest said. Among those newcomers to the food bank system is Ranada James. The 47-year-old child care professional had received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits in the past but never dealt with a food bank before the pandemic. On a recent overcast Wednesday, James was one of a few dozen people lining up in their cars for a weekly drive-through food pantry operated by a local charity called The Arc in southeast Washington, D.C., the poorest and most virus-ravaged part of the city. Volunteers loaded her backseat with pre-prepared hot

meals, lunch sacks, fresh vegetables from The Arc's garden and sealed boxes of durable goods.

"I never thought I would need it," she said. "It helped tremendously, and it still really helps."

Even as the situation slowly improves, James finds herself in need. She has two grandchildren and two nieces living with her, and she's keeping them from attending in-person school out of fear of the pandemic — which means she can't go back to work.

"They really do eat," she said with a laugh, adding that broccoli and fresh string beans were household favorites. "They're growing, and they're picky."

Other food banks across the country are reporting similar trends: a gradual decrease this year, starting in about April, but still far higher than any pre-pandemic numbers. At the Central California Food Bank in Fresno, the numbers have "leveled off" in recent months but remain 25% higher than in 2019,

said the food bank's co-CEO, Kym Dildine.

"Many people are still out of work, particularly women, who are the primary caregivers in the home," she said.

At the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C., the amount of food distributed in July 2021 was 64% higher than in the same month in 2019.

"COVID isn't over by any means," said the food bank's president, Radha Muthiah. "We're still seeing existing need."

Just how long the elevated level of need will last is a matter of debate, with the most conservative estimates projecting it will last well into next summer. Some are predicting that the country's food banks may never return to normal.

Parallel government food assistance programs like SNAP benefits, commonly known as food stamps, also saw a pandemic-fueled spike in usage. The Department of Agriculture, which administers SNAP, reports

that the number of SNAP users increased by 7 million between 2019 and 2021. In August, President Joe Biden instituted a permanent 25% boost in SNAP benefits, starting this month.

But the SNAP program doesn't come close to covering every family in need. Muthiah said many of the clients who depend on food banks for their nutrition are either ineligible for SNAP benefits, intimidated by the bureaucratic paperwork or fearful of applying due to their immigration status. That leaves food banks as the primary source of aid for millions of hungry people.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack told the AP that at the peak of the pandemic, 14% of American adults were receiving SNAP benefits. That number is now down around 8%, but the need remains highly elevated, and nonprofit charitable options like food banks serve a vital role in papering over the remaining holes in millions of family budgets, he said.

"We just need to understand what this pandemic has done in terms of significant disruption of what was probably a pretty fragile system to begin with," said Vilsack, who also filled the same Cabinet post under former President Barack Obama. "It has exposed the fragility of the system, which makes programs like SNAP, programs like summer feeding programs, school feeding programs, food bank assistance ever more important."

Vilsack said the Biden administration has moved to strengthen the national food bank infrastructure by devoting \$1 billion in June to help fund refrigerated trucks and warehouses that will allow food banks to store and provide more fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products. □

House returns to stave off default with debt limit vote

By **KEVIN FREKING**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Members of the House are scrambling back to Washington on Tuesday to approve a short-term lift of the nation's debt limit and ensure the federal government can continue fully paying its bills into December.

The \$480 billion increase in the country's borrowing ceiling cleared the Senate last week on a party-line vote. The House is expected to approve it swiftly so President Joe Biden can sign it into law this week. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had warned that steps to stave off a default on the country's debts would be exhausted by Monday, and from that point, the department would soon be unable to fully meet the government's financial obligations.

A default would have immense fallout on global financial markets built upon the bedrock of U.S. government debt. Routine government payments to Social Security beneficiaries, disabled veterans and active-duty military personnel would also be called into question.

"It is egregious that our nation has been put in this spot, but we must take immediate action to address the debt limit and ensure the full faith and credit of the United States remains intact," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md. But the relief provided by the bill's passage will only be temporary, forcing Congress to revisit the issue in December — a time when lawmakers will also be laboring to complete federal spending bills and avoid a damaging government shutdown. The yearend backlog raises risks for both parties and threatens a tumultuous close to Biden's first year in office.

The present standoff over the debt ceiling eased when Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., agreed to help pass the short-term increase. But he insists he won't do so again.

In a letter sent Friday to Biden, McConnell said Democrats will have to handle the next debt-limit increase on their own using the same process they have tried to use to pass Biden's massive social spending and environment plan. Reconciliation allows legislation to pass the Senate with 51 votes rather than the 60 that's typically required. In the 50-50 split Senate, Vice President Kamala Harris gives Democrats the majority with her tiebreaking vote.

Lawmakers from both parties have used the debt ceiling votes as leverage for other priorities. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi threatened to vote against raising the debt ceiling when President Donald Trump was in office, saying she had no intention of supporting lifting the debt ceiling to enable Republicans to give another tax break to the rich. And Republicans in 2011 managed to coerce President Barack Obama into accepting about \$2 trillion in deficit cuts as a condition for increasing the debt limit — though lawmakers later rolled back some of those cuts.

Pelosi told reporters Tuesday that over the years Republicans and Democrats have voted against lifting the debt ceiling, "but never to the extent of jeopardizing it."

Pelosi said she hoped that Congress would lift the debt ceiling in a bipartisan way this December because of the stakes involved. But she also floated a bill sponsored by Rep. Brendan Boyle, D-Pa., that would transfer the duty of raising the debt limit away from Congress and vest it with the Treasury secretary, saying, "I think it has merit." In his focus on the debt limit, McConnell has tried to link Biden's big federal government spending boost with the nation's rising debt load, even though they are separate and the debt ceiling will have to be increased or suspended regardless of whether Biden's \$3.5 trillion plan makes it



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., speaks during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

into law.

"Your lieutenants on Capitol Hill now have the time they claimed they lacked to address the debt ceiling through standalone reconciliation, and all the tools

to do it," McConnell said in the letter. "They cannot invent another crisis and ask for my help."

McConnell was one of 11 Republicans who sided with Democrats to advance the

debt ceiling reprieve to a final vote. Subsequently, McConnell and his GOP colleagues voted against final passage.

Agreement on a short-term fix came abruptly. Some Republican senators said threats from Democrats to eliminate the 60-vote threshold for debt ceiling votes — Biden called it a "real possibility" — had played a role in McConnell's decision.

"I understand why Republican leadership blinked, but I wish they had not," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

The current debt ceiling is \$28.4 trillion. Both parties have contributed to that load with decisions that have left the government rarely operating in the black. □



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Coroner: Gabby Petito strangled 3-4 weeks before found

By MEAD GRUVER

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Cross-country traveler Gabby Petito was strangled, a Wyoming coroner announced Tuesday.

Petito, 22, died three to four weeks before her body was found Sept. 19 near an undeveloped camping area along the border of Grand Teton National Park in remote northern Wyoming, Teton County Coroner Dr. Brent Blue said in a news conference.

It wasn't clear if the determination might lead to additional charges against Petito's boyfriend and traveling partner, Brian Laundrie, who is considered a person of interest in her disappearance and remains unaccounted for.

Blue declined to say more about the autopsy or the case overall, saying he was prevented by Wyoming law that limits what coroners can release.

Petito had been on a cross-country trip with Laundrie, visiting Colorado, Utah and other states. She was re-



This police camera video provided by The Moab Police Department shows Gabrielle "Gabby" Petito talking to a police officer after police pulled over the van she was traveling in with her boyfriend, Brian Laundrie, near the entrance to Arches National Park on Aug. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

ported missing Sept. 11 by her parents after she did not respond to calls and texts for several days while the couple visited national parks in the West.

Blue previously classified Petito's death as a homicide — meaning her death was caused by another person — but had not disclosed how she was killed pending further autopsy

results.

A "detailed analysis" led to his conclusion Petito was strangled, Blue said.

"Nothing is obvious in a case like this," he said.

Blue said little more about Petito's physical condition — including whether she may have been strangled directly by somebody's hands, a rope or some other item — but noted when

asked that she wasn't pregnant.

The three to four weeks her body was believed to be in the wilderness, however, put her death around the Aug. 27-30 period investigators believe Petito and Laundrie had traveled to the area.

Petito's case has led to renewed calls for people to pay greater attention

to cases involving missing Indigenous women and other people of color, with some commentators describing the intense coverage of her disappearance as "missing white woman syndrome."

The search for Laundrie has generated a frenzy, with TV personalities like Duane Chapman — known as Dog the Bounty Hunter — and longtime "America's Most Wanted" host John Walsh working to track him down. Petito and Laundrie posted online about their trip in a white Ford Transit van converted into a camper. They got into a physical altercation Aug. 12 in Moab, Utah, that led to a police stop, which ended with police deciding to separate the quarreling couple for the night. No charges were filed, and no serious injuries were reported.

Investigators have searched for Laundrie in Florida and also searched his parents' home in North Port, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) south of Sarasota. □

Federal immigration agents to end practice of worksite raids



In this May 25, 2021, file photo, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas speaks with the media outside of the Little Haiti Cultural Center in Miami.

Associated Press

By SOPHIA TAREEN

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Federal immigration agents will end mass workplace arrests of immigrant employees suspected of living in the U.S. without legal permission, according to a memo issued Tuesday by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Instead, the focus will shift

to pursuing "unscrupulous employers who exploit the vulnerability of undocumented workers" and emphasize fighting worker abuse including paying substandard wages, unsafe working conditions and human trafficking.

The three-page memo directs the heads of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border

Protection and Citizenship and Immigration Services to draw up a plan within two months to increase employer penalties, encourage workers to report unscrupulous practices without fear and coordinate with other agencies, such as the Department of Labor.

Mass worksite raids were common under former President Donald Trump, including a 2019 operation targeting Mississippi chicken plants, the largest such operation in over a decade. Trump and other Republican presidents defended raids as strong deterrents against illegal immigration, while workers groups called them unfair and discriminatory. For instance, most of the 680 workers arrested at chicken plants run by companies including Illinois-based Koch Foods were Latino.

Tuesday's move away from raids more closely resembles the approach by

former President Barack Obama, who largely avoided such operations, limiting workplace immigration efforts to low-profile audits.

"The deployment of mass worksite operations, sometimes resulting in the simultaneous arrest of hundreds of workers, was not focused on the most pernicious aspect of our country's unauthorized employment challenge: exploitative employers," Mayorkas wrote. "These highly visible operations misallocated enforcement resources while chilling, and even serving as a tool of retaliation for, worker cooperation in workplace standards investigations."

Along with ending mass worksite arrests, Mayorkas said immigration authorities should also immediately start using "prosecutorial discretion" when it comes to encouraging workers to speak up about workplace exploitation and preventing employers from using retaliatory threats of depor-

tation.

Workers rights groups applauded the move, saying immigrant workers, particularly those without legal permission to live in the U.S., are especially vulnerable. Industries such as meatpacking and chicken processing are particularly reliant on immigrant labor for backbreaking work often set in rural areas with limited access to attorneys. During the initial weeks of the pandemic, Trump ordered meatpacking plants to remain open amid concerns about the nation's food supply, even as COVID-19 outbreaks were closing plants.

"It is long past time for DHS to stop enabling employers who use the threat of deportation as a tool to facilitate exploitation and evade accountability," Nadia Marin-Molina an executive director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network said in a statement. □

Divorced U.K. and EU head for new Brexit fight over N. Ireland

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — It was late last Christmas Eve when the European Union and Britain finally clinched a Brexit trade deal after years of wrangling, threats and missed deadlines to seal their divorce.

There was hope that now-separated Britain and the 27-nation bloc would sail their relationship toward calmer waters.

With Christmas closing in again one thing is clear — it wasn't to be.

Britain's Brexit minister on Tuesday accused the EU of wishing failure on its former member and of bad-mouthing the U.K. as a country that can't be trusted. David Frost said during a speech in Lisbon that the EU "doesn't always look like it wants us to succeed" or "get back to constructive working together."

He said a fundamental rewrite of the mutually agreed divorce deal was the only way to fix the exes' "fractious relationship." And he warned that Britain could push an emergency override button on the deal if it didn't get its way.

"We constantly face generalized accusations that we can't be trusted and that



In this Oct. 15, 2019 file photo, EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, right, speaks with Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, left, during a meeting in Luxembourg.

Associated Press

we aren't a reasonable international actor," Frost added — a response to EU claims that the U.K. is seeking to renege on the legally binding treaty that it negotiated and signed.

Post-Brexit tensions have crystalized into a worsening fight over Northern Ireland, the only part of the U.K. to share a land border with an EU country, which is Ireland. Under the most delicate

and contentious part of the Brexit deal, Northern Ireland remains inside the EU's single market for trade in goods, in order to avoid a hard border with EU member Ireland.

That means customs and border checks must be conducted on some goods going to Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K., despite the fact they are part of the same country. The

regulations are intended to prevent goods from Britain entering the EU's tariff-free single market while keeping an open border on the island of Ireland — a key pillar of Northern Ireland's peace process.

The U.K. government soon complained the arrangements weren't working, saying the rules impose burdensome red tape on businesses. Never short of a

belligerent metaphor, 2021 has already brought a "sausage war," with Britain asking the EU to drop a ban on processed British meat products such as sausages entering Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland's British Unionist community, meanwhile, says the Brexit deal undermines the 1998 Good Friday peace accord — which sought to protect the rights of both Unionist and Irish Nationalist communities — by weakening Northern Ireland's ties with the rest of the U.K.

The bloc has agreed to look at changes to the Protocol, and is due to present proposals on Wednesday. Before that move, Britain raised the stakes again, with Frost demanding sweeping changes to the way the agreement is governed.

In his speech in the Portuguese capital, Frost said the Protocol "is not working."

"It has completely lost consent in one community in Northern Ireland," he said. "It is not doing the thing it was set up to do — protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. In fact it is doing the opposite. It has to change." □

Serbia's leader defends right to buy weapons where he wants

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbia will continue arming itself with Russian, Chinese and other weapons, its president said Tuesday, despite fears in the region and the West that the Balkan country's recent military buildup could lead to more tensions in part of Europe which is still reeling from wars fought in the 1990s.

Opening an arms fair that coincided with a two-day summit marking the 60th anniversary of the first conference of non-aligned nations, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said Serbia was a "free and independent nation" that would not seek outside opinions about where it sources weapons.

"If anyone thinks that we

should ask the U.S. or the EU to decide about our weapons, let's abolish our state," Vucic said at the arms fair taking place at the same time as the summit commemorating the 1961 conference in Serbia's capital, Belgrade. Serbia is widely blamed for triggering a bloody breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s with its nationalist policies. The country lately has armed itself mostly with Russian and Chinese warplanes, drones and anti-aircraft systems.

"We are a free country that wants to deter a potential aggression," Vucic said, adding that although Serbia is on the "road to the European Union, it wants cooperation with every-

one."

Although formally seeking EU membership, Serbia has refused to align its foreign policies with the 27-nation bloc and has instead strengthened its alliance with Russia and China.

Serbia has frequently been accused of working with Slavic ally Russia to destabilize neighboring Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo. To join the EU, Serbia needs the support of all EU member nations, but the government has maintained frosty relations with fellow Balkan country Croatia, the last new member admitted into the bloc.

Vucic said that holding the summit of nations not formally aligned with NATO or other power bloc together with the arms fair at the



A soldier holds a new M19 rifle made by Serbian armaments company Zastava Arms at an arms fair in Belgrade, Serbia, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

same location was just "a coincidence." Critics said the events were timed to offer arms to the unaligned developing nations. Vucic said they can buy weapons at "a bargain price."

The non-aligned movement was founded 60 years ago as a counterbalance to the power wielded by the Soviet Union and the United States. It lost much of its influence after the end of the Cold War. □

Activists seek legal marijuana in former hippie haven Nepal

By **BINAJ GURUBACHARYA**
KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) —

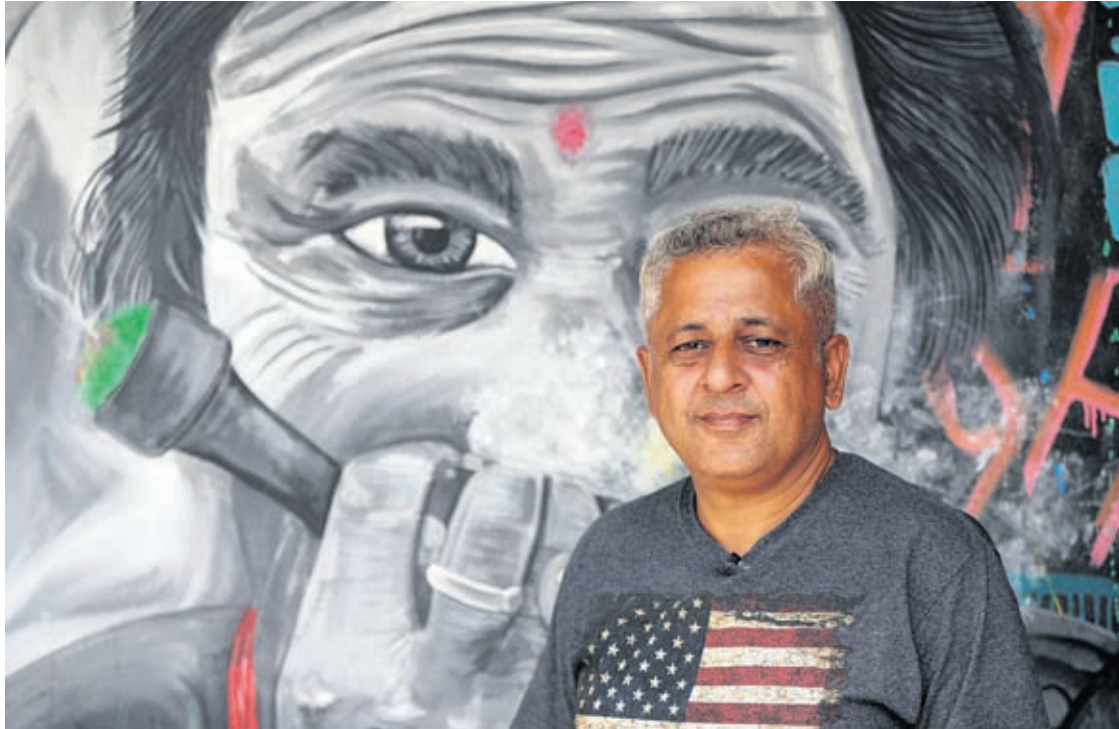
Widely available marijuana once drew thousands of hippies to Nepal, where its use was not only accepted but embedded in both the culture and religion.

But the country followed other nations in outlawing marijuana in the late 1970s and chased away the hippies who came on buses from Europe and United States.

Half a century later, campaigners are seeking to again legalize the farming, use and export of marijuana as more countries allow its medicinal and recreational use.

Supporters have introduced a bill in Parliament that would legalize marijuana, although debate has been delayed by continuing squabbles between political parties for power. "We are demanding the legalization of marijuana in Nepal firstly for medicinal purposes for patients who are dying," Rajiv Kafle, a campaign leader, said at his "Hippie Hill" retreat in the mountains surrounding the capital, Kathmandu.

Kafle, who lives with HIV, said marijuana helped him



Nepal's legalize marijuana campaign leader Rajiv Kafle poses for a photograph at "Hippie Hill," a retreat in the mountains surrounding Kathmandu, Nepal, Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021.

Associated Press

cope with pain and kept him away from alcohol and other drugs.

Marijuana use is widely accepted in Nepal. It was freely farmed and attracted Western hippies in the 1960s and 1970s. However, pressure from Western governments made Nepal introduce laws making marijuana and other narcotics illegal.

Some portraits of the most

revered Hindu god, Shiva, show him smoking marijuana. Devotees and Hindu holy men are often seen smoking in temples.

Marijuana plants often grow wild in villages, but police sometimes destroy plants grown on farms for sale.

It is not difficult to buy marijuana in cities, where there are thousands of users.

"You can see everyone

smoking in Nepal from young kids to old people," said Polish tourist Lukasz Walendziak.

Kafle and a coworker at his retreat were detained last month by police and released on bail but face narcotic distribution charges.

Under the law, anyone possessing marijuana for personal use can be jailed for a month, but distribution and

sales are punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment depending on the amount of marijuana seized.

Kafle said legalization of marijuana could benefit the country's economy by attracting tourists, adding that it was the arrival of hippies that brought tourists to Nepal.

"With our low cost of production and the competitive edge we have in the global market for cannabis, we surely are going to win and this is going to change the country," he said.

The campaigners have convinced some politicians of the benefits of legalizing marijuana.

Health minister Birod Khatriwada, a powerful member of the governing coalition, has been lobbying for the proposed bill and has registered for debate in Parliament on the issue. He said about 9,000 people are currently in jail on marijuana-related charges.

"I am trying to make it a campaign and issue in Parliament because many countries including the most powerful and developed countries have allowed the use of marijuana," Khatriwada said. □

Israel PM urges U.N. to hold Iran to account for nuclear moves



In this Oct. 5, 2021 file photo, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett speaks at the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem.

Associated Press

By **LAURIE KELLMAN**

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called Tuesday on the United Nations Security Council to take action against Iran over its escalating nuclear program.

Bennett spoke at a conference in Jerusalem, where he suggested that Iran's conduct is every nation's problem, and subject to global accountability.

After talks between Tehran and world powers on reviving the nuclear deal stalled

earlier this year, Iran has breached limits set by the accord. It has been enriching small amounts of uranium to its closest-ever levels to weapons-grade purity as its stockpile continues to grow.

Bennett said he has made the case to other leaders, including President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, that Iran is violating basic international commitments in the shadow of the now-tattered 2015 nuclear deal. Merkel, who visited Israel on Sunday in her final official visit, said that Germany remains committed to reviving the deal — a step Israel opposes. The Biden administration is also trying to revive the nuclear deal. Bennett said he expects global powers to "bring (Iran) to the U.N. Security

Council, hold Iran accountable for it." That, he added, "would be the peaceful route" forward.

Bennett spoke as Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid traveled to Washington, where he was expected to detail Israel's message on Iran in meetings with Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and congressional leaders in both parties.

Bennett last month met with Biden for the first time as prime minister and president, with Iran topping the agenda. "We're putting diplomacy first and seeing where that takes us," Biden said. "If diplomacy fails, we're ready to turn to other options."

Israel has vowed to act unilaterally against Iran if need be. Iran says its nuclear program is only for peaceful

purposes.

Earlier this year, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said on Fox News that Israel was still working on its strike plans against Iran.

And just last month, Israel's recently-retired navy chief told The Associated Press that the military has stepped up its activities in the Red Sea "exponentially" in the face of growing Iranian threats to Israeli shipping.

Vice Adm. Eli Sharvit stopped short of confirming a series of attacks and mishaps on Iranian ships that have been attributed to Israel. But he described Iranian activities on the high seas as a top Israeli concern and said the navy is able to strike wherever necessary to protect the country's economic and security interests. □



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Mexico's anti-corruption effort takes a PR blow

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president has made punishing corruption the centerpiece of his political agenda, so when one of the country's most corrupt and self-confessed ex-officials was photographed dining out carefree at a luxury restaurant over the weekend, it wasn't good optics.

The photographs of Emilio Lozoya, the former head of the state-run oil company who is now a government witness in a corruption case involving allegations of hundreds of millions in bribes, couldn't have come at a worse time.

Currently, Mexico's attorney general is trying to lock up 31 academics in a maximum security prison because he claims they improperly received about \$2.5 million in government science funding years ago. The laws at the time allowed such funding, and the researchers say it wasn't misspent.

Meanwhile, the same attorney general hasn't managed to jail any of the top figures implicated in a big corruption case at the state-run Pemex oil company that almost bankrupted the firm.

Mexico City security analyst Alejandro Hope was blunt about the uproar Monday: "The optics suck. They're horrible."

Even López Obrador was angered by the photos of Lozoya in a Mexico City restaurant, even though as a protected witness he is not confined to his home or under any form of arrest.

"I believe it is legal, but is immoral that these things happen. It is imprudent, at the very least," López Obrador said. "That is why there is so much indignation at him eating at a luxury res-



In this Aug. 17, 2017 file photo, Emilio Lozoya, former head of Mexico's state-owned oil company Pemex, gives a news conference in Mexico City.

Associated Press

taurant. Even though he can legally do so, he is a witness to acts of corruption that damaged Mexico a lot."

It is all the more embarrassing because López Obrador announced Monday he will make only his second trip outside the country to visit the United Nations on Nov. 9 — to give a speech about the dangers of corruption.

Lozoya fled to Spain, was arrested there and extradited back to Mexico in 2020. He quickly decided to turn state's evidence and testify against other former officials, in return for not going to jail himself.

Lozoya alleged that former President Enrique Peña Nieto and his right-hand man, then treasury secretary Luis Videgaray directed him to bribe lawmakers, including five senators, to support controversial energy and other structural reforms in 2013 and 2014.

Lozoya also faces corruption charges related to Pe-

mex's overvalued purchase of a fertilizer plant and to millions in dollars of bribes paid by Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht. He has said Peña Nieto and Videgaray told him to use \$4 million from Odebrecht to pay foreign campaign consultants for work on Peña Nieto's 2012 election campaign.

Videgaray has denied the accusations. Peña Nieto, who left office in 2018 and is reported to live abroad, hasn't spoken publicly since the allegations surfaced. Neither man faces any charges.

And the businessman accused of bilking the government on the fertilizer plant deal quickly repaid some of the money and was released.

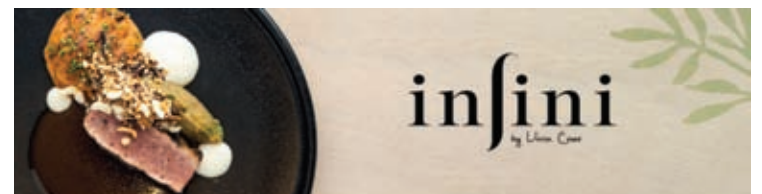
So the only people prosecutors have really gone after in the case are the opposition politicians who allegedly received the bribes, and that has raised suspicions in a country where the law has long

been used only to punish political enemies.

The office of Attorney General Alejandro Gertz Manero said in a statement that the case against Lozoya and the other allegedly corrupt officials continues. He said Lozoya's case will come up again at a Nov. 3 hearing.

But Lozoya has already won numerous extensions in his case. "Lozoya has been able to play for time, and he may be betting on this administration ending," said Hope, the security analyst.

The photographs of Lozoya dining out with friends pretty much put to rest the idea that López Obrador was going to energetically prosecute crimes of the past, the analyst said. □



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A lot has happened in the past 30 years, and it has all been exciting, positive growth. While maintenance and upgrades are a way of life at the resort, the one asset which remains constant and untouched is the much-loved beach, measuring over 700 feet, delivering a 250 feet long sand box, for the members to play in, year round".

Almost 10 years ago, the resort undertook extensive renovations, including the complete u-shaped five story building with its 155 units, 139 two bedrooms and 16 three bedroom suites. The renovations introduced energy saving smart systems, and other efficient strategies, streamlining the operation and paving the way for the upcoming Frangipani Suites, five additional units on the ground floor, featuring 3 bedrooms/3 bathrooms and 2 bedrooms/2bathroom luxury accommodations. Costa Linda Beach Resort is currently owned and governed by the Costa Linda Beach Resort Cooperative Association which is made up of all its time share owners.

Since then, some things have changed, but some things remain the same. There are employees that have been with the resort for those 30 years, who welcome you with the same friendly smile and warm greeting upon your arrival. They have upgraded their facility many times over the past 3 decades, but their purpose and commitment to provide you with the best possible vacation experience remains unchanged. □



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Henry Bengis celebrated his 100+ in Aruba



When Henry is in the office of General Manager Luigi Heredia, he entertains his audience, Luigi and the executive assistant at Costa Linda Beach Resort. The man is a character. He's been coming to Aruba since the 80's, never missed a year, including 2020. He intends to spend the next few weeks under a beach palapa, he says, among his Aruban friends, at his home away from home.



Donna & Jack Sullivan

Not knowing what we'd find twenty years ago, Jack and I flew to this amazing Island with tropical blue waters. Immediately, we felt a warm, hospitable presence from the Aruban people. Falling in love with the Island, we immediately purchased time-share ownership at Costa Linda.

As years went on, we not only purchased many more weeks at our Resort, but also purchased in addition, our own three-bedroom condo on the Island.

So many new friends we've acquired over the years as well as our love and appreciation for all the hard-working employees at our Resort. A true family we have here!



There have been so many good times and fond memories over the years, even having the privilege and honor of becoming Costa Linda's first Carnival Queen in 2004. Yes indeed, the Sullivan family has become fond lovers of Aruba.

Our favorite hotel staff by Nancy Fletch



"The following photos are from our favorite people at Costa Linda resort. Maria is our housekeeper on the 5th floor in December when we are there. She is pictured with my husband Chuck. Edwin who manages the bar walked me down the aisle when Chuck and I renewed our wedding vows and Rossy Deveaux who has been our favorite beach beautiful girl who is just amazing! We love all the Costa Linda staff so much. Hope to see you all in December. Stay safe. Stay healthy."

Aruba Beach Cigar Club

Have a look at this great picture sent to us a while ago by John Hensel. He wrote:

"Aruba to me is Spending time with my Aruba family! Pictured here is our ever growing Aruba Beach Cigar Club (ABCC) formed in 2011 at Costa Linda."





AHATA: CDC Level 4 Alert affected hotel occupancy in September

ORANJESTAD – The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association has released the most recent hotel performance results and announced that in September the hotels experienced a 12-point loss in average occupancy after the CDC's alert travel for Aruba was raised.

EFFECT ON SEPTEMBER:

	OCC Forecast Reported on 8/7	OCC Forecast Reported on 9/6	Actual OCC Reported on 10/7
September	68%	60%	56%

SEPTEMBER 2021 DATA:

- Occupancy: The occupancy rate was 56.3%, which is 29.2% lower than September 2019.
- 25% of the hotels experienced a lower than

40% occupancy rate.

- ADR: The average daily rate (for occupied rooms) was \$243.25, which is an increase of 13.6% compared to 2019.
- RevPAR: The revenue per available room was 20% lower than a year ago, at \$136.89.

YEAR TO DATE:

In the first nine months of 2021, Aruba's hotels experienced an average occupancy of 53.4%. When compared to the same period last year, ADR is down 8.6% and RevPAR down 43%.

OCCUPANCY FORECAST:


	Occupancy	OCC level compared to 2019
October	63%	83%
November	71%	85%
December	73%	88%
2021	58%	68%

TIMESHARE

AHATA's Timeshare properties experienced a 74% occupancy in September, and are projecting an 82% average occupancy in October.

AHATA member hotels: Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Barceló Aruba, Boardwalk Boutique Hotel, Brickell Bay Beach Club, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Courtyard by Marriott, Divi & Tamarijn All-Inclusive, Eagle Aruba Resort, Holiday Inn Resort Aruba, Hyatt Regency Aruba, Hyatt Place Aruba Airport, Manchebo Beach Resort, Marriott Aruba & Stellaris Casino, Paradera Park, Radisson Blu Aruba, Renaissance Aruba Resort, The Ritz-Carlton Aruba, RIU Palace Aruba, RIU Palace Antillas, Talk of the Town Hotel.

AHATA member timeshares: Divi Aruba Phoenix, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Village Golf, La Cabana, Marriott Ocean Club, Marriott Surf Club. □




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-Minister Dangui Oduber



Ministerio di Turismo y Salud Publico



Companies scraping for staff ahead of the holidays

By JOSEPH PISANI

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — All employers want for Christmas is some holiday help. But they might not get their wish.

Companies that typically hire thousands of seasonal workers are heading into the holidays during one of the tightest job markets in decades, making it unlikely they'll find all the workers they need. For shoppers, it might mean a less than jolly holiday shopping experience, with unstaffed store aisles and online orders that take longer than usual to fill.

Job openings are already plentiful, allowing job seekers to be pickier about where they work. There were 10.4 million job openings at the end of August and 11.1 million openings the month before, the highest on record since at least December 2000, when the government started recording that figure. At the same time, the Labor Department said that the number of people quitting their jobs jumped to 4.3 million in August, up from 4 million in July.

Even before the holiday hiring season, employers were so desperate to find workers that they raised pay above \$15 an hour, started offering four-figure sign-on bonuses and promised to pay their schooling. But that yielded only limited success. If they can't find the workers they need in time for the holidays, employers will likely rely on existing staff to work more overtime, which can become costly for businesses and lead to burnout for workers.

"I've never seen a market like this," said Matt Lavery, UPS's global director of sourcing and recruiting, who has worked on the hiring side of the package delivery company for 24 years. "Normally when you're talking about people coming off unemployment benefits, you see surges in candidates. We're not seeing those."

Enhanced unemployment benefits, which included



In this Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, photograph, a sign advertising for workers stands outside a Hy-Vee grocery store in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Associated Press

a \$300-a-week federal supplement as well as programs that covered gig workers and people who were jobless for six months or more, ended in early September. That cut off aid to roughly 7 million people. So far, though, the termination of those programs appears to have had little effect on the number of people looking for work.

To snap up available workers as fast as it can, UPS is trying a new tactic: Hire in 30 minutes or less. Taking too long to hire can mean an applicant may go elsewhere. So the company has nearly done away with interviews, and does the whole hiring process online. Not having enough workers can be costly for companies. FedEx said it spent \$450 million between June and August due to higher wages, paying overtime and other costs related to the tight job market.

At one of its hubs in Portland, Oregon, FedEx has about 65% of the staff it needs. The company has been diverting about a quarter of the packages that would normally flow to other hubs farther away that can handle it. More than 600,000 packages a day are being rerouted, leading to worsening ser-

vice, said FedEx Chief Operating Officer Rajesh Subramaniam President, during a call with investors last month.

FedEx said it needs 90,000 holiday workers this year, 20,000 more than last year. Others are hiring around the same levels as last year: Amazon, UPS and Walmart, each of which is currently trying to hire 100,000 people or more.

There are many reasons why workers are in short supply, but they mostly revolve around the pandemic.

The delta variant has made people fearful of working in tight spaces with others, and most major employers that hire hourly workers haven't mandated vaccines for them yet. Child care issues leave people needing to stay home, and many have been saving money during the pandemic, giving them enough cash to avoid taking jobs they don't want.

Another potential wrinkle: President Joe Biden's announcement in September that employers with more than 100 workers will have to mandate vaccines or offer weekly testing. It's unclear when those rules will start or how that would affect hiring. Companies that have already mandated vaccines have reported high rates of vaccinations. And a fully vaccinated workforce could make that employer more attractive to workers fearful of catching the virus. But some employers fret that the mandate could complicate hiring further.

Some wonder whether employers that need holiday help will be able to find workers in time.

"It doesn't look good," said Andrew Challenger, senior vice president at hiring firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, which predicts retailers will add 700,000 workers during the holidays this year, 36,000 fewer than last

year.

At job site Indeed, searches by people looking for seasonal work were down 13% the week ending Oct. 10, compared to the same period a year ago. And those searches were down 27% from 2019, before the pandemic began.

"The job seeker interest is sluggish," said AnnElizabeth Konkel, an economist at Indeed. "It's just not taking off."

Those already working in stores, warehouses and package delivery companies may work longer hours. Target said it will hire 100,000 holiday workers this year, about 30,000 less than last year, but will give 5 million additional hours to its existing workforce, potentially pumping \$75 million more into workers' paychecks. Target employees are already working nearly 15% more than last year, but the retailer said they are asking for more hours. Target, which already pays workers at least \$15 an hour, is planning to give store workers an extra \$2 an hour if they work weekends and other busy days closer to Christmas.

Craig Rowley, who works at the retail and consumer goods team at management consulting firm Korn Ferry, said if employers can't find the workers they need, online orders could take longer because there won't be enough people to pack orders or deliver them, especially as it gets closer to Christmas and more shoppers head online. And stores are likely to do away with late night or overnight hours since retailers will want their existing staff to work when stores are busiest.

"You're not going to see the wild extended hours because they just can't staff it," Rowley said. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Aspirin target
- 5 Gave orders
- 11 Wow 'em at the comedy club
- 12 On the go
- 13 Account
- 14 Tidy up
- 15 Cobbler's tool
- 16 Not quite closed
- 17 Honeydew, e.g.
- 19 Implore
- 22 Deli fixture
- 24 Long look
- 26 Melodies
- 27 Stepped down
- 28 Comes to
- 30 Bars on cars
- 31 Sinking signal
- 32 Outfit
- 34 Severe criticism
- 35 Museum focus
- 38 Unmoored
- 41 Recite the rosary
- 42 Illinois city
- 43 Pass over
- 44 Less relaxed
- 45 Cruise stop

DOWN

- 1 Nick and Nora's dog
- 2 Hammer part
- 3 Symbols of quality
- 4 Retina setting
- 5 Bluegrass instrument
- 6 Globe features
- 7 Teacher's reward
- 8 Plop down
- 9 Cain raiser
- 10 Cub's cave
- 16 Pub pint
- 18 Otherwise
- 19 Diamond settings

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Yesterday's answer

- 20 Pennsyl- Gulf nation
- 21 Obtains trees
- 22 Cutting sight
- 23 Italian sendoff
- 25 Fare carrier
- 29 Phone photo
- 30 Penguin's cousin
- 33 Persian omega
- 34 Evergreen
- 36 Stairway
- 37 Kind
- 38 Fitting
- 39 Ruby of films
- 40 Harry's friend
- 41 Letter before

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10-13

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-13

CRYPTOQUOTE

UTI NXTL JBDLI OMCS DCS

ZXTK MCIX BFBC NXTL

ZODKKBZI IDZY IJMZ MZ IJB

ZBRLBI XH ZTRRBZZ

— ZPDOM ZMFDCDCSD

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: LETTING SOMEONE KNOW THAT YOU NEED HELP IS A TRUE SHOW OF STRENGTH. — MECCA WOODS



A woman holds an aspirin pill in the Brooklyn borough of New York on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021.

Associated Press

Advice shifting on aspirin use for preventing heart attacks

By LINDSEY TANNER
AP Medical Writer

Older adults without heart disease shouldn't take daily low-dose aspirin to prevent a first heart attack or stroke, an influential health guidelines group said in preliminary updated advice released Tuesday.

Bleeding risks for adults in their 60s and up who haven't had a heart attack or stroke outweigh any potential benefits from aspirin, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said in its draft guidance.

For the first time, the panel said there may be a small benefit for adults in their 40s who have no bleeding risks. For those in their 50s, the panel softened advice and said evidence of benefit is less clear.

The recommendations are meant for people with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity or other conditions that increase their chances for a heart attack or stroke. Regardless of age, adults should talk with their doctors about stopping or starting aspirin to make sure it's the right choice for them, said task force member Dr. John Wong, a primary-care expert at Tufts Medical Center.

"Aspirin use can cause serious harms, and risk increases with age," he said.

If finalized, the advice for

older adults would backtrack on recommendations the panel issued in 2016 for helping prevent a first heart attack and stroke, but it would be in line with more recent guidelines from other medical groups.

The task force previously said certain people in their 50s and 60s may want to consider a daily aspirin to prevent a first heart attack and stroke, and that they might get protection against colorectal cancer, too. The updated guidance says more evidence of any benefit for colorectal cancer is needed.

Doctors have long recommended daily low-dose aspirin for many patients who already have had a heart attack or stroke. The task force guidance does not change that advice.

The guidance was posted online to allow for public comments until Nov. 8. The group will evaluate that input and then make a final decision.

The independent panel of disease-prevention experts analyzes medical research and literature and issues periodic advice on measures to help keep Americans healthy. Newer studies and a re-analysis of older research prompted the updated advice, Wong said.

Aspirin is best known as a pain reliever but it is also

a blood thinner that can reduce chances for blood clots. But aspirin also has risks, even at low doses — mainly bleeding in the digestive tract or ulcers, both of which can be life-threatening.

Dr. Lauren Block, an internist-researcher at Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research in Manhasset, New York, said the guidance is important because so many adults take aspirin even though they have never had a heart attack or stroke.

Block, who is not on the task force, recently switched one of her patients from aspirin to a cholesterol-lowering statin drug because of the potential harms.

The patient, 70-year-old Richard Schrafel, has high blood pressure and knows about his heart attack risks. Schrafel, president of a paperboard-distribution business, said he never had any ill effects from aspirin, but he is taking the new guidance seriously.

Rita Seefeldt, 63, also has high blood pressure and took a daily aspirin for about a decade until her doctor told her two years ago to stop.

"He said they changed their minds on that," recalled the retired elementary school teacher from Milwaukee. She said she understands that science evolves. □

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Audrey Diwan eager to bring Venice winner 'Happening' to U.S.

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

French filmmaker Audrey Diwan's life changed forever when her sophomore film "Happening" won the top award at the Venice International Film Festival exactly one month ago. In the four weeks since, Diwan has picked up more prizes, secured a North American distributor in IFC Films and FilmNation and is in the running to represent France at the Oscars in 2022.

"Happening's" Golden Lion win surprised many simply because of the high-profile competition which included the likes of Jane Campion and Paolo Sorrentino. Hers was a subtle film about a college student in France in the 1960s who is seeking to terminate an unexpected pregnancy and stars a relative unknown, Anamaria Vartolomei. And yet it broke through as the unanimous choice for the prestigious prize from a decorated jury that included "Parasite" director Bong Joon Ho and "Nomadland" director Chloe Zhao.

"We really didn't expect anything. There were so many talented people. We were really happy and humbled," Diwan said. "I had so many feelings at the same time. I was thinking about the movie. I was



Audrey Diwan holds the Golden Lion award for her film 'Happening' after the closing ceremony of the 78th edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, on Sept. 11, 2021.

Associated Press

thinking about my actress, I knew it was going to change everything for her. I was thinking about (author) Annie Ernaux because it's a true story and it's her story. And my last thought was that the topic was in everyone's minds."

It's been a banner year for female filmmakers in France. Earlier this year, Julia Ducournau became the second woman ever to win the Palme d'Or at

the Cannes Film Festival for her wild body-horror slash family drama "Titane." Ducournau's film is also in the running for France's Oscar submission, which will be decided Tuesday. The last time France selected a woman's film for the Academy Awards was 2015 with Deniz Gamze Ergüven's "Mustang."

"I think it says something really strong about the industry in general. What

happened basically is that they allowed more women to do movies," Diwan said. "And it's a mathematical question: If you allow more women to make movies, of course they will be rewarded. But you have to look carefully at the very beginning, at the moment where the industry gives you the money to make your movie."

Diwan didn't actually pick up a camera until she was

in her 30s. She studied journalism and political science and wrote novels and screenplays before deciding to direct. Her first feature, "Losing It," came out in 2019.

"I feel now that I'm ready for what I want to do because I've had so many different experiences," Diwan said. "I'm finally ready for it."

"Happening" was not an easy film to get made, despite praise for Ernaux' novel, which was in the running for a Pulitzer. Diwan set out to make something clear-eyed and honest about a young woman from a less privileged background who is desperate to continue her education, as well as the reality of "back alley" abortions.

Although the film is set in the '60s, she's acutely aware that it's still relevant. She wrote the movie with Poland in the back of her mind. Then on the way to Venice with the finished film she read about the ongoing situation in Texas.

"I did this movie for what it means to me. I love to make movies not to give answers but to ask questions," Diwan said. "I feel strongly that somehow the movie meets the moment and we have something to discuss and share around it." □

Matt Amodio's history-making run on TV's 'Jeopardy!' ends



This photo provided by Jeopardy Productions Inc. shows "Jeopardy!" contestant Matt Amodio during a taping of the popular game show.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — All good things must come to an end and Matt Amodio's his-

toric run on "Jeopardy!" did just that on Monday's show, leaving the Yale doctoral

student with 38 wins and more than \$1.5 million in prize money.

Amodio failed to answer the Final Jeopardy! clue correctly and came third on Monday's show, his streak cut short by new champion Jonathan Fisher, an actor originally from Coral Gables, Florida.

Amodio finished No. 2 on the all-time consecutive wins list behind only Ken Jennings with 74 wins. He won a total of \$1,518,601, which puts him third on the all-time non-tournament cash winnings list behind James Holzhauer (\$2,462,216) and Jennings (\$2,520,700).

"I know going into every bar trivia game that I play that

I'm going to come in with a little intimidation factor. But also, I just like the badge that it represents. As somebody who prioritizes knowledge and knowing things, this is really a good one to have following me everywhere," Amodio, a fifth-year computer science Ph.D student at Yale University, said in a statement. He became known for starting all of his questions with "What's..." instead of using suitable alternatives such as "Who is..." an unorthodox approach that made some longtime viewers groan.

But it was within the quiz show's rules and, as Amodio explained, helped him limit any "unnecessary mov-

ing parts" that might undermine his effectiveness.

What became known as the "Amodio Rodeo" proved a welcome distraction for the quiz show and its producer Sony Pictures Television, which saw its effort to replace its late and beloved host Alex Trebek founder.

Sony turned to guest hosts Mayim Bialik and Jennings after its original pick for the job, "Jeopardy!" executive producer Mike Richards, exited the show following the disclosure of his past disparaging podcasts remarks about women and others.

Sony has said it was resuming its search for a permanent host. □

'22 Boston Marathon, and more change, just 6 months away

By JIMMY GOLEN

AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — First was the marathon.

Now comes the sprint.

A day after the only fall race in the Boston Marathon's 125-year history, organizers turned their attention to the 2022 event and whether to keep any of this year's pandemic-inspired changes.

Complicating their planning: they have half the usual time to decide.

"I know we call it the 125th, but this one was like starting over again," race director Dave McGillivray said on Tuesday, about 24 hours after Kenyans Benson Kipruto and Diana Kipyogei broke the tape on Boylston Street. "Next year, who knows if we do anything like this?"

One decision that's already been made: the race won't immediately go back to the full, pre-pandemic field size of more than 30,000 when it returns to its traditional Patriots' Day start on April 18, 2022. To allow for greater social distancing at the start and on the course, this year's field was capped at



Marcel Hug, front left, Manuela Schar, front right, both of Switzerland, and Benson Kipruto, rear left, and Diana Kipyogei, rear right, both of Kenya, wave while posing for a photograph following a news conference, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021, in Boston.

Associated Press

about 18,000 — with 15,736 making it to the starting line and 15,461 finishing. How much smaller is still being debated.

"If we can find somebody to tell me precisely what the public health situation will be, we'll know what the field size will be," Boston Athletic Association Presi-

dent Tom Grilk said.

"So it will be some number that's smaller," he said. "And, if a miracle occurs and suddenly there's one pill that prevents COVID and another one that cures it, we'll expand the field size in January."

Grilk said organizers haven't decided whether to re-

tain the rolling start, used for the first time this year, in which runners boarded scheduled buses in Boston and left Hopkinton as soon as they arrived instead of waiting around on the Town Green for hours for their wave to be called.

The change was popular — McGillivray said runners

kept asking him, "Can we really start right now?" But it also stretched the process for about an hour longer than the 50% larger field needed in 2019.

That required the eight cities and towns along the course to keep their roads closed — an added cost in services and convenience. A rolling start with a full, 30,000 person field would need even more time.

"A lot of people are going to love it," Grilk said. "Which would you rather do, wait for a long time, or just go?"

"But you're trying to close it with 30,000 people and still give the roads back to the cities and towns so people can get on with their lives," he said.

Grilk said organizers juggled different plans over the past 14 months, including ones in which everybody would be tested. "When we started planning this, there was no vaccine," he said.

Instead, the B.A.A. required all participants to either prove they were vaccinated or pass a COVID test before picking up their bib number. □

USGA, R&A provide rule for tours to limit driver length

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

The length of Phil Mickelson's driver he used in winning the PGA Championship won't be allowed. Bryson DeChambeau can only use a 48-inch driver when he's competing in Long Drive Association events.

Golf's governing bodies announced a new "model local rule" available Jan. 1 that would limit the maximum length of all clubs except the putter to 46 inches.

Mickelson uses a 47.5-inch driver — it was 47.9 inches at Kiawah Island when at age 50 he became golf's oldest major champion — and Lefty was not pleased in August when he heard this limit was close to being announced, calling it "pathetic."

Mickelson argued that restricted length of a driver would promote a shorter

and more violent swing, which would be injury prone, and doesn't allow for the length of arc in the swing to create speed. He also said the "amateur" governing bodies were trying to make golf less fun. But this isn't for everyone, only the elite.

A model local rule gives a tour or any other golf organization the right to apply the rule to specific tournaments. Given that the U.S. Golf Association and Royal & Ancient are in charge of the rules worldwide, the driver limit will be in effect at the U.S. Opens, British Opens and their other championships.

The PGA Tour also said it will go along, which was not a surprise. The major tours have been working with the governing bodies on rules in recent years, including the overhaul of the Rules of Golf that took effect in 2019.

The tour said after hearing feedback on the USGA and R&A's proposal, it surveyed its own members and found a small number of players on the PGA Tour, PGA Tour Champions and Korn Ferry Tour were using clubs longer than 46 inches. "We have concluded that the PGA Tour will implement the local rule," the tour said in a statement, saying adopting it was consistent with other equipment rules changes the tour has supported since 2003.

DeChambeau toyed with the idea of using a 48-inch driver at the Masters. His emphasis has been on speed of swing to generate enormous distance. Those drivers are used in long drive competitions, and DeChambeau recently reached the quarterfinals with a number of drives that went 400 yards or more.

The restriction on driver length has been on the



Phil Mickelson smiles during a practice day at the Ryder Cup at the Whistling Straits Golf Course Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021, in Sheboygan, Wis.

Associated Press

table for years, put on hold when the USGA and R&A embarked on an ambitious "Distance Insights" project in which it determined that increased gains in distance was not good for the game.

"Admittedly, this is not the 'answer' to the overall distance debate/issue, but

rather a simple option for competitive events," Mike Whan, the CEO of the USGA, said in a statement. "It's important to note that it's not a 'Rule of Golf,' and as such, it is not mandated for the average recreational golfer. Rather, this is an available tool for those running competitive events." □

Gruden gone, and it couldn't have come fast enough

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP Sports Columnist

Jon Gruden might still be coaching had he merely been exposed as a remorseful racist. His email about union chief DeMaurice Smith's lips was both disturbing and despicable, but it was from a decade ago when Gruden was not coaching in the NFL. And Gruden did apologize immediately, while insisting he doesn't have an "ounce of racism in me." No apology could be fast enough when even more emails followed. The targets were many. The shots were crude. The emails were exposed, and so was Gruden's real character. An ounce of racism? How about a cup of misogyny? Maybe a full pint of homophobia? Gruden is gone, and it couldn't have happened fast enough. The coach who had a meteoric rise to national prominence as a football coach and network TV analyst came



Las Vegas Raiders head coach Jon Gruden watches from the sideline during the second half of an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears, Sunday, Oct. 10, 2021, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

crashing to earth even faster, done in by one cringe-worthy email after another. He leaves the Raiders with more than six years and \$60 million left on the contract that enticed him back to coaching again. And he leaves with his reputa-

tion shredded after being caught in emails saying nasty things about everyone from Roger Goodell to former President Barack Obama. He was a quarterback guru who won a Super Bowl as a young coach in Tampa Bay, then

went on to a starring stint in primetime as an analyst on Monday Night Football. Now he's out of the NFL for what might be forever, and his supporters have fled with each new revelation. Just how bad are the emails? So bad it's hard to

find a group Gruden didn't single out.

According to the New York Times, he denigrated the idea of women referees, and exchanged pictures of NFL female cheerleaders wearing only bikini bottoms. He used homophobic slurs, and railed on against the drafting of gay players into the league.

The paper also said Gruden said a player who demonstrated during the national anthem should be fired and that he mocked a 2017 article about players calling on Goodell to support racial equality and criminal justice reform.

Oh, and he saved his worst homosexual name calling for the commissioner of the league that employed him. This from a coach who in June welcomed Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib's announcement that he was gay by saying "I learned a long time ago that what makes a man different is what makes him great." □

Top-seeded Medvedev wins, Pliskova upset at Indian Wells



Daniil Medvedev, of Russia, follows through on a shot to Filip Krajinovic, of Serbia, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament Monday, Oct. 11, 2021, in Indian Wells, Calif.

Associated Press

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. (AP) — Top-seeded Daniil Medve-

dev beat Filip Krajinovic 6-2, 7-6 (1) to reach the round

of 16 on a gusty Monday night at the BNP Paribas Open. Karolina Pliskova, the women's top seed, was upset by Beatriz Haddad Maia.

Medvedev, the U.S. Open champion, connected on 70% of his first serves and fired four aces despite challenging weather conditions. Haddad Maia got into the main draw as a lucky loser. She lost in the final round of qualifying and got in when No. 29 seed Nadia Podoroska withdrew with a thigh injury. Haddad Maia inherited Podoroska's first-round bye and then beat Mayir Sherif in the second round.

Ranked 115th, the Brazilian reached the round of 16 at a WTA 1000 event for the first time.

On a windy day at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, Pliskova held serve to tie the second set 5-5, but she got broken eight times in the match. Haddad Maia held and then broke Pliskova in the final game to wrap up her second career win over a Top-5 player.

No. 15 Coco Gauff lost to 21st-seeded Paula Badosa 6-2, 6-2 in a match that was briefly suspended by rain on a night of wild weather in the desert.

No. 10 Angelique Kerber defeated 20th-seeded

Daria Kasatkina 6-2, 1-6, 6-4. No. 12 Ons Jabeur beat Danielle Collins 6-1, 6-3 for her Tour-leading 46th match win of the year. No. 16 seed Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 champion, lost to 18th-seeded Anett Kontaveit 7-6 (5), 6-3. On the men's side, No. 6 Casper Ruud outlasted Lloyd Harris 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-4. No. 8 Hubert Hurkacz and 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman advanced. No. 16 Reilly Opelka lost to 23rd-ranked Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-4.

No. 9 Denis Shapovalov was beaten by 19th-seeded Aslan Karatsev 7-5, 6-2. □