

What's News

Business & Finance

Oracle is in talks to buy electronic-medical-records company Cerner, a deal that could be valued at around \$30 billion and push the enterprise-software maker further into healthcare. **A1**

◆ **The Bank of England** and the European Central Bank took diverging policy paths a day after the Federal Reserve set the stage for interest-rate increases in 2022. **A1**

◆ **A federal judge** overturned a roughly \$4.5 billion settlement between Purdue Pharma and members of the Sackler family who own the drugmaker. **A3**

◆ **Former McDonald's CEO** Easterbrook agreed to return compensation now valued at over \$105 million to resolve a legal dispute related to his dismissal as head of the firm. **A1**

◆ **A sharp fall in tech shares** pushed major U.S. stock indexes lower. The S&P 500, Nasdaq and Dow fell 0.9%, 2.5% and 0.1%, respectively. **B11**

◆ **FedEx posted** a 14% increase in revenue for its fiscal second quarter, as higher rates helped offset rising costs from labor shortages. **B1**

◆ **Prosecutors in the criminal-fraud trial of Theranos founder Holmes** stated their case once more in closing arguments Thursday. **B1**

◆ **Meta Platforms said** it removed about 1,500 Facebook and Instagram accounts that it linked to groups it called "cyber mercenaries." **B1**

◆ **Bruce Springsteen** sold his music rights to Sony Music for between \$500 million and \$600 million. **B2**

World-Wide

◆ **More than 60,000 Afghan** interpreters and others who have applied for visas to seek shelter in the U.S. after working alongside American forces still remain in Afghanistan, a State Department official said. **A1**

◆ **The CDC recommended** adults take a Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer or Moderna over J&J's after agency officials reported the rate of a rare but serious blood-clotting condition was higher than previously detected. **A8**

◆ **Biden acknowledged** that work on Democrats' \$2 trillion education, healthcare and climate plan was nowhere near complete, as a series of parliamentary challenges and Manchin's concerns stalled progress on the bill. **A4**

◆ **The Biden administration** is ending settlement talks that could have led to payments totaling \$1 billion to families separated in 2018 under the Trump administration's immigration policy. **A3**

◆ **The FDA relaxed** restrictions around an abortion pill that had prevented women from getting the medication without first making in-person visits to pick up the prescriptions at medical offices. **A3**

◆ **Harris said she** and Biden haven't discussed whether he plans to run for re-election and that it isn't a topic she thinks about. **A6**

◆ **Haitian kidnappers** freed the remaining 12 missionary hostages who were abducted two months ago, the U.S. missionary group and a Haitian police spokesman said. **A9**

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Manchin's Objections Stall Democrats' Ambitions



SNAG: Concerns raised by Sen. Joe Manchin (D, W.Va.), seen at the Capitol on Thursday, posed a hurdle for Democrats seeking to pass a \$2 trillion education, healthcare and climate plan. President Biden said work on the bill is nowhere near complete. **A4**

Central Banks in Europe Take Different Tacks on Rate Path

Europe's foremost central banks took diverging policy paths a day after the Federal Reserve set the stage for rate rises in 2022, differing ap-

By Jason Douglas
in London and Tom
Fairless in Frankfurt

proaches that underscore the challenges for policy makers as they balance surging inflation and renewed risks to growth from the fast-spreading Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

The Bank of England became the first of the world's major central banks to raise its benchmark interest rate since the pandemic began, while the European Central Bank said it would phase out an emergency bond-buying program while ramping up other stimulus measures to keep the 19-nation eurozone's recovery on track.

Fed officials on Wednesday set out plans to accelerate the withdrawal of stimulus and signaled they expect to raise interest rates three times next

year, a major policy pivot that reflects heightened concern about the potential for inflation to stay high.

The shifts show how central banks' plans to phase out multitrillion-dollar stimulus policies and move toward higher interest rates are playing out at different speeds in the world's big economies, which are struggling with incomplete recoveries at the same time as inflationary pressures mount.

"I don't think that something happening at the Fed is bound

to happen" in Europe, ECB President Christine Lagarde said Thursday. The U.S., the U.K. and eurozone economies are at different phases of the economic cycle, and received different levels of government support during the pandemic, she said.

Please turn to page A2

◆ **Greg Ip:** Fed's assumptions didn't pan out. **A2**
◆ **Recoveries** slow in the U.S. and Europe. **A2**
◆ **Heard on the Street:** Risk for markets isn't higher rates. **B12**

Covid's Secret Toll: Other Patients

In one doctor's practice, the chronically ill suffer the most amid overwhelmed system

By Anna Wilde Mathews

On Feb. 26, Christine Hancock thought to die. Her 48-year-old patient had skipped the dialysis that kept him alive. The day before, she called him six times before he picked up. He was gasping for breath and unable to complete a sentence.

Dr. Hancock told him he might not live until the next day. He promised to go to the hospital. When he failed to arrive, she called the police. He wouldn't go with the paramedics who came to his house.

Mr. Milton was on a downward spiral, and Dr. Hancock, a primary-care doctor in Bellingham, Wash., felt powerless to stop it.

A year earlier, at the start of 2020, Mr. Milton had been stable, years after Dr. Hancock helped him get off heroin. He had lost weight and completed treatment for hepatitis C. But, isolated and fearful of Covid-19, he had become anxious and began missing medical appointments and using drugs again. His health had declined rapidly—even though he never caught the virus.

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INSIDE



SPORTS

Urban Meyer's career as an NFL coach unravels after less than a season. **A16**

MANSION

A Long Island vineyard, winery or grape-ready land is the hot new status symbol. **M1**

More Than 60,000 Afghan Allies Seek Visas to Enter U.S.

By Jessica Donati

WASHINGTON—More than 60,000 Afghan interpreters and others who have applied for visas to seek shelter in the U.S. after working alongside American forces still remain in Afghanistan, a State Department official said Thursday.

About 33,000 Afghans, including principal applicants and their families, have already cleared the more-onerous vetting requirements and could be eligible for immediate evacuation. This is the first time the State Department has provided a number on those left behind since the Afghanistan government collapsed this summer.

A total of 62,000 Afghans are believed to have been left behind, the official said.

U.S. evacuation flights, facilitated by Qatar and local organizers on the ground, have stepped up in recent weeks. Seats are prioritized for Americans and U.S. residents, but some are available for Afghans who have cleared vetting in the visa-application process.

The State Department official said that the remaining 29,000 visa applicants are in earlier stages of the application process. The figure doesn't include their family members at this stage. The vetting steps aim to verify

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McDonald's Ex-CEO Returns Severance

By Heather Haddon

Former McDonald's Corp. Chief Executive Steve Easterbrook agreed to return compensation now valued at more than \$105 million to resolve a legal dispute related to his dismissal as head of the burger chain, the company said Thursday.

The settlement, which al-

lows McDonald's to move past a scandal that has weighed on it for more than two years, also includes an apology from Mr. Easterbrook.

The former CEO has returned company stock and cash currently valued at more than \$105 million that was allotted to him after he was dismissed in November 2019 when he acknowledged having a consensual relationship with an unnamed

employee, McDonald's said.

Less than a year later, the company sought to recoup the severance through legal action. The settlement avoids a trial against the former top executive that was slated to begin in Delaware Court of Chancery in May.

Mr. Easterbrook said: Please turn to page A6

Wayward Band of Otters Wreaks Havoc in Singapore

Recent run-in divides city-state over smooth-coated denizens

By Jon Emont

Singapore has a reputation for being a staid, safe city, where one can securely take an early-morning walk. No one told that to the Asian financial capital's growing population of smooth-coated otters.

Graham Spencer, a U.K. national based here, was taking his daily walk at dawn in late

November when a jogger ran through a pack of otters on a path, setting them off.

The fast-moving jogger got away, but Mr. Spencer, the next-closest person, said he quickly found himself on the ground and overwhelmed by attacking otters. "So they've

gone from this nice bunch of things...to these amazingly rabid dogs, like piranhas just on me and I couldn't get up," Mr. Spencer said.

Mr. Spencer sustained around two dozen bites to his legs, finger and buttocks, receiving treatment in a hospital and a doctor's office, according to his account,



Keep your distance

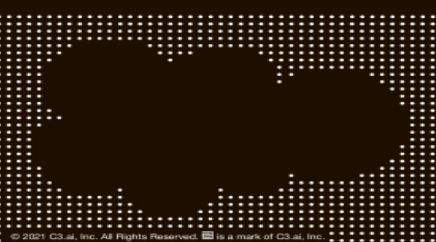
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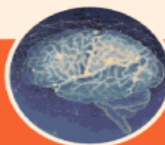
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Chile divided

Presidential election pits far left against far right — BIG READ, PAGE 15

Mind control

Why regulating neurotechnology is a no-brainer — JOHN THORNHILL, PAGE 17



Trumping democracy

Inaction over failed coup is a threat to the US system — EDWARD LUCE, PAGE 4

Gate closing France acts to stem Omicron

Passengers arrive at Paris Gare du Nord on Eurostar from London before new travel restrictions between the UK and France come into force from midnight tonight.

The French government said yesterday that British travellers would be banned from entering the country in an attempt to contain the fast-spreading Omicron variant of coronavirus. The move came as the UK registered another record high of daily infections, with 88,376 Covid-19 cases and 146 deaths.

The new travel measures introduced by Paris will allow citizens and their families as well as residents to return home, while barring non-essential business travel to France.

Report page 2



Chris Ridd/Getty Images

BoE leads inflation fight with first rate increase of major economies

◆ Borrowing costs lifted to 0.25% ◆ Norway follows suit ◆ Outlier Turkey announces cut

CHRIS GILES — LONDON

The Bank of England yesterday became the first major central bank to raise interest rates in response to inflation concerns, spearheading a global move among central banks towards action on price rises.

Increasing its main policy rate from a floor of 0.1 per cent to 0.25 per cent, the bank's governor, Andrew Bailey, said that swift action was needed because it had "seen evidence of a very tight labour market" and "more persistent inflation pressures".

The UK central bank's action followed hawkish moves by the Federal Reserve, which on Wednesday signalled that three US rate rises were likely to come next year. The BoE move came on the

same day that Norway's central bank raised rates and the European Central Bank said it would scale back its bond-buying stimulus programme.

A string of emerging market central banks have had to raise interest rates in recent weeks to quell demand and inflation stemming from higher food, energy and goods prices.

However, Turkey has become the exception: its central bank yesterday lowered interest rates one percentage point to 14 per cent while president Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced a 50 per cent rise in the minimum wage.

Sceptical investors responded with a further outflow of capital, intensifying the pressure on a plunging Turkish lira. With the currency having fallen precipitously this year, the new Turkish mini-

mum wage was still 27 per cent lower in US dollar terms than at the start of 2021.

Away from Ankara, the main global economic concern has shifted towards excessive inflation as stimulus policies and a pandemic-led surge in demand for goods have policymakers worried that inflation will stay too high for too long.

Admitting that inflation was heading to about 6 per cent in the UK, Bailey said: "We're concerned about inflation in the medium term. And we're seeing things now that can threaten that. So that's why we have to act."

Further "modest" rises in rates would still be needed in the months ahead, the bank's Monetary Policy Committee said, to keep inflation under control and lower it to the BoE's 2 per cent target.

Mohamed El-Erian, president of



The UK central bank said that further "modest" rises in interest rates would be needed in the months ahead to keep inflation under control

Queens' College, Cambridge university, praised the BoE's early rate rise as a move to quell inflationary pressures. He said it showed that "among central banks, the BoE has been ahead in understanding inflation dynamics and their implications for policy".

The MPC said that the Omicron wave would knock the economy at the end of this year and in the first quarter of 2022, but the effects of the variant on inflation were unclear. The majority on the MPC said there was some value in waiting longer to see Omicron's impact, but this was outweighed in their thinking by "a strong case for tightening monetary policy now, given the strength of current underlying inflationary pressures".

ECB & Turkey minimum wage page 2
Lex page 18

Briefing

► **TPG joins wave of buyout firm listings**
The Texas-based buyout firm, one of the world's largest, has filed to go public, the latest in a series of goings in the sector that have sought to capitalise on soaring valuations by listing their shares. — PAGE 6

► **South Korean groups in Myanmar talks**
South Korea's Myanmar embassy organised a high-level meeting last month between the military junta and Korean groups including units of Samsung and LG, say papers seen by the Financial Times. — PAGE 4

► **Grocers take action on deforestation**
Sainsbury's, Carrefour and Aldi have agreed to stop selling several Brazilian meat products after a probe found that they contributed to the destruction of the Amazon. — PAGE 10

► **Evergrande sued by creditors for \$13bn**
Chinese creditors have sued Evergrande for more than \$13bn in allegedly overdue payments, as local companies race against offshore bondholders to secure repayment by the ailing developer. — PAGE 8

► **Brazil boots out IMF office**
Brazil is kicking out the IMF's representative office in the country after complaints over the institution's forecasts. "It has been years since they were needed here," said the finance minister. — PAGE 4

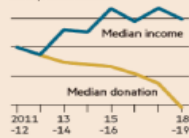
► **UK watchdog fines GAM over Gupta ties**
Britain's FCA has fined GAM and its ex-star fund manager Tim Hayward over a scandal centred on debt tied to metals magnate Sanjeev Gupta and Australian financier Lex Greensill. — PAGE 10

► **Edtech Byju's in talks on \$40bn Spac**
The Indian educational technology start-up is in talks to go public in the US by linking with a blank cheque company led by Churchill Capital, in a deal that would value it at more than \$40bn. — PAGE 6

Datawatch

Donations dive

Real term changes relative to 2011, for top 1% of earners



Source: Pro Bond Economics

Charitable donations from Britain's top 1 per cent of earners have fallen more than a fifth over the past decade, despite their incomes rising. Their contribution is down from 9 per cent of overall public giving in 2011 to 6 per cent.



Buyout groups ready for their film studio close-ups

Although lockdowns meant that stuck-at-home audiences turned to television as an escape, the curbs also halted the pipeline of new material. With filming back to pre-pandemic levels, movie studios are scrambling to churn out fresh material and the race is on to find suitable locations for shoots. Buyout firms such as Blackstone and TPG, which have committed more than \$4bn in recent months, are piling into what was previously a niche market.

Hollywood real estate fight ► PAGE 9

McDonald's claws back \$105m from disgraced former chief Easterbrook

ANDREW EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON
NEW YORK

Steve Easterbrook, the former McDonald's chief executive who was fired over a relationship with a subordinate, has forfeited more than \$105m to settle one of corporate America's most extraordinary executive pay battles.

The burger chain yesterday revealed Easterbrook's return of awards, which far exceeded the \$40m-plus severance package he was granted on his exit in 2019, in a bluntly worded announcement that included a public apology from the British executive.

"This settlement holds Steve Easterbrook accountable for his clear misconduct, including the way in which he exploited his position as CEO," said Enrique Hernandez, chair of the McDonald's board, in a statement that

said Easterbrook had lied and tried to impede investigations into his actions.

The company said Easterbrook had returned equity awards and cash worth more than \$105m "which he would have forfeited had he been truthful at the time of his termination and, as a result, been terminated for cause".

Easterbrook said he had "failed at times to uphold McDonald's values and fulfil certain of my responsibilities as a leader of the company. I apologise to my former co-workers, the board, and the company's franchisees and suppliers for doing so."

McDonald's terminated his employment "without cause" in November 2019 for violating company policy by having a consensual relationship with an employee, allowing him to receive severance benefits worth about \$40m.

In August 2020, however, the com-

pany said it had reopened an investigation into the divorced executive's conduct after an anonymous tip alleged he had another such relationship.

That probe led McDonald's to sue Easterbrook, alleging he had three "physical sexual relationships" with employees beyond the liaison he had admitted to, including with one woman to whom he approved a stock grant worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The company alleged that Easterbrook had lied to the board about the relationships and deleted emails, although servers retained dozens of explicit photos and videos he had sent.

Corporate lawyers and academics said when the allegations emerged they knew of few precedents for such a public feud, with most disputes between companies and former executives settled away from the glare of media attention.

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World Markets

STOCK MARKETS

	Dec 16	prev	%chg
S&P 500	4697.90	4709.05	-0.25
Nasdaq Composite	15317.05	15565.58	-1.60
Dow Jones Ind	36060.13	35927.43	0.37
FTSE 100	11650.35	11626.00	0.20
Euro Stoxx 50	4209.80	4199.68	0.20
FTSE 250	7290.61	7170.75	1.25
FTSE All-Share	4122.08	4074.13	1.16
CAC 40	7055.07	6927.63	1.12
Nikkei	15636.40	15476.35	1.03
Hang Seng	23475.50	23420.78	0.23
MSCI World	3175.11	3138.06	1.18
MSCI EM	1214.50	1222.10	-0.62
MSCI ACWI	741.68	734.72	0.98

CURRENCIES

	Dec 16	prev	%chg
\$ per £	1.131	1.125	0.57
€ per £	1.333	1.322	0.87
¥ per £	0.848	0.851	-0.35
¥ per \$	113.745	113.835	-0.08
¥ per €	151.640	150.438	0.80
£ per \$	0.884	0.889	-0.56
£ per €	0.750	0.757	-0.92
€ per \$	1.179	1.175	0.34
¥ per €	128.611	128.082	0.41
¥ per \$	81.321	81.307	0.02
¥ per £	1.229	1.224	0.41
£ per \$	0.884	0.889	-0.56
£ per €	0.750	0.757	-0.92
€ per \$	1.179	1.175	0.34
¥ per €	128.611	128.082	0.41
¥ per \$	81.321	81.307	0.02
¥ per £	1.229	1.224	0.41

Prices are latest for addition Data provided by Bloomberg

INTEREST RATES

	price	yield	chg
US Gov 10 yr	145.81	1.43	-0.01
UK Gov 10 yr	0.68	0.62	-0.06
Ger Gov 10 yr	-0.35	0.01	-0.01
Japan Gov 10 yr	112.94	0.04	0.00
US Gov 30 yr	119.52	1.88	0.05
Ger Gov 30 yr	104.62	-0.70	-0.02
Fed Funds Eff	0.09	0.09	0.00
US 3m Bills	0.05	0.05	0.00
Euro Libor 3m	-0.61	-0.61	0.00
UK 3m	0.10	0.09	0.01

Prices are latest for addition Data provided by Bloomberg

IF YOU CARE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE, YOU CAN START WITH FINANCE.

Today, finance professionals need to combine financial expertise with sustainable economics. In partnership with MINES ParisTech, we've launched a new double degree MSc in Climate Change & Sustainable Finance. It will give a committed new generation of finance professionals the skills they need to successfully transition to a low carbon economy.



Make an impact

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Late Edition

Today, periodic clouds and sunshine, breezy, mild, high 59. Tonight, becoming cloudy, rain late, cooler, low 40. Tomorrow, cloudy, colder, rain, high 44. Weather map, Page A20.



A line for Covid-19 tests in Manhattan. An average of more than 10,600 infections were being identified each day in New York State.

Omicron's Spread Certain, But Its Full Threat Is Not

For New York City, a Familiar Anxiety

Vaccines Thought to Diminish Severity

This article is by Michael Wilson, Sharon Ottomano, Lola Fadulu and Ashley Wong.

Holiday plans abruptly reversing, restaurants closing, Broadway shows going dark while, blocks away, long lines form outside testing sites — it's as if it were 2020 all over again.

The startling rise in coronavirus infections has whiplashed New York City and the surrounding region. Once more, most everyone seems to know someone who is infected.

Millions of people who have followed the city's guidelines and received two or even three vaccination shots, who have in recent weeks and months enjoyed a return to many of their old practices — riding the subway, dining indoors, partying with friends — face an uncertain future.

It's scary — it feels like we've been here before," said Emma Clippinger, 36, waiting in a long line outside a testing site in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, on Thursday. "It feels like last year, last winter, despite the vaccines and despite the boosters, and it's the same game plan, but it also feels like we get defeated often."

New York City and the surrounding Northeast, the epicenter of the coronavirus's arrival in 2020, is being buffeted by a new surge in infections that seems poised to disrupt the long-awaited return to normalcy. New case reports in New York State have skyrocketed nearly 60 percent in the last two weeks.

"It is clear that the Omicron variant is here in New York City in full force," Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Thursday.

Deirdre Depke, 59, waiting in line for a test on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, didn't need the mayor to tell her. "Monday I wasn't even thinking about it," she said, "and Thursday I'm in a panic."

An average of more than 10,600 infections were being identified each day in New York State, more than any other state, and hospitalizations were also increasing, although more slowly. The city's test positivity rate doubled in just three days, up to 7.8 percent on Sunday compared with 3.9 percent the previous Thursday, raising alarm bells among city officials and residents alike.

The number of new cases reported statewide on Thursday alone — 18,276, more than 8,300 of them in New York City — was the highest since at least January.

Continued on Page A18

By EMILY ANTHES

Even as scientists race to understand more about the Omicron variant and the threat it poses, one fact is abundantly clear: It spreads quickly everywhere it lands.

In South Africa, Omicron spread twice as fast as the highly infectious Delta variant. In Britain, officials have estimated that 200,000 people are becoming infected with Omicron every day. In Denmark, Omicron cases are doubling roughly every two days.

And early data from the United States suggest that Americans will not be spared. "No part of the country will be safe from Omicron," said Shweta Bansal, a disease ecologist at Georgetown University.

Delta remains the dominant variant nationally and was driving a surge in cases and hospitalizations even before Omicron emerged. Roughly 120,000 new Covid cases are being reported every day, a 40 percent increase



Rapid tests being administered at a mobile site in Manhattan.

from two weeks ago, although the figures remain below last winter's peak.

But Omicron could soon overtake Delta, scientists said. Nationally, the share of cases caused by Omicron has increased to 2.9 percent from 0.4 percent in just a week, according to projections by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is far higher in some regions of the country.

Researchers at one University of Washington lab have reported that the share of viral samples seeming to contain Omicron's telltale pattern of mutations has jumped to 20 percent from 3 percent.

Continued on Page A18

VACCINE SHIFT The C.D.C. decided to recommend Moderna or Pfizer over J.J.'s shot. PAGE A19

Tracking How Project Veritas Obtained Diary of Biden's Daughter

By ADAM GOLDMAN and MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

In the final two months of the 2020 campaign, President Donald J. Trump, his grip on power slipping because of his handling of the pandemic, desperately tried to change the narrative by attacking the business dealings of Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s son Hunter, invoking his name publicly over 100 times.

At the same time, another effort was underway in secret to try to expose the contents of a diary kept the previous year by Mr. Biden's daughter Ashley Biden as

she underwent treatment for addiction.

Now, more than a year later, the Justice Department is deep into an investigation of how the diary found its way into the hands of supporters of Mr. Trump at the height of the campaign.

Federal prosecutors and F.B.I. agents are investigating whether there was a criminal conspiracy among a handful of individuals to steal and publish the diary. Those being scrutinized include current and former operatives for the conservative group Project Veritas; a donor Mr. Trump appointed to a political position in the final days

Ex-Housemates and a Trump Donor Under Federal Scrutiny

of his administration; a man who once pleaded guilty in a money laundering scheme; and a financially struggling mother of two, according to people familiar with federal grand jury subpoenas and a search warrant, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

Extensive interviews with peo-

ple involved in or briefed on the investigation and a review of court filings, police records and other material help flesh out elements of a tale that is testing the line between investigative journalism and political dirty tricks.

The investigation has focused new attention on how Mr. Trump or his allies sought to use the troubles of Mr. Biden's two surviving children to undercut him.

The inquiry has also intensified the scrutiny of Project Veritas. Its founder, James O'Keefe, was pulled from his apartment in his underwear and handcuffed dur-

Continued on Page A16

F.D.A. Allows Abortion Pills Through Mail

By PAM BELLUCK

The federal government on Thursday permanently lifted a major restriction on access to abortion pills. It will allow patients to receive the medication by mail instead of requiring them to obtain the pills in person from specially certified health providers.

The decision, by the Food and Drug Administration, comes as the Supreme Court is considering whether to roll back abortion rights or even overturn its landmark 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* that made abortion legal nationwide.

The F.D.A.'s action means that medication abortion, an increasingly common method authorized in the United States for pregnancies up to 10 weeks' gestation, will become more available to women who find it difficult to travel to an abortion provider or prefer to terminate a pregnancy in their homes. It allows patients to have a telemedicine appointment with a provider who can prescribe abortion pills and send them to the patient by mail.

Earlier this year, for the duration of the pandemic, the F.D.A. temporarily lifted the in-person requirement on mifepristone, the first of two drugs used to end a pregnancy. The decision to make this change permanent is likely to deepen the already polarizing divisions between conservative and liberal states on abortion. In 19 states, mostly in the South and the Midwest, telemedicine visits for medication abortion are banned,

Continued on Page A22



A Nation's Gratitude

President Biden gave the Medal of Honor to Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee on Thursday. Page A22.

In a Kentucky Town, a Lifeline Ripped to Pieces

By EDGAR SANDOVAL and RICHARD FAUSSET

MAYFIELD, Ky. — Hispanic workers referred to the big, boxy factory on the west side of town as Las Velas, for the product it turned out: candles. Employees brought the calming fragrances — lavender, vanilla — home with them, imbued in their clothes. Some preferred it to the nearby local chicken plant or farms, where the work was backbreaking.

"I thanked God for the opportunity," said Flor Almazan, a Guatemalan immigrant who was hired for \$7.50 an hour three years ago

Anger and Despair at a Ravaged Factory

to place wicks in little jars of wax.

But last Friday, a swarm of tornadoes that plowed across six states reduced the factory to rubble, trapping dozens of workers including Ms. Almazan, who was buried alive for hours, her cries for help joining a chorus of despair. Eight people died, and Mayfield Consumer Products, the company that operates the plant, is facing intense scrutiny in the

storm's aftermath.

Angry survivors have asked why supervisors did not cancel the Friday night shift, given the ample warnings that tornadoes were likely to spin up in the area. Some employees have claimed that supervisors threatened to fire workers if they left their shifts early as the tornadoes approached — an accusation the company denies. On Thursday, some of those workers filed a lawsuit accusing the company of "flagrant indifference" for refusing to let them go home early.

Amid the acrimony is worry.

Continued on Page A14

Judge Rejects Opioids Settlement That Shields Sacklers From Suits

By JAN HOFFMAN

A federal judge on Thursday evening unraveled a painstakingly negotiated settlement between Purdue Pharma and thousands of state, local and tribal governments that had sued the maker of the prescription painkiller OxyContin for the company's role in the opioids epidemic, saying that the plan was flawed in one critical area.

The judge, Colleen McMahon of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, said that the settlement, part of a restructuring plan for Purdue approved in September by a bankruptcy judge, should not go forward because it releases the company's owners, members of the billionaire Sackler family, from liability in civil opioid-related cases.

Although the Sacklers did not file for personal bankruptcy pro-

Purdue Owners Agreed to Pay \$4.5 Billion

tection, they had made immunization from opioid claims an absolute requirement in exchange for contributing payments amounting to \$4.5 billion to the agreement.

But the bankruptcy code, Judge McMahon said, does not explicitly permit a judge to grant such releases, which she called "the great unsettled question."

The Sacklers did not respond to requests for comment on Thursday evening.

Lawyers for a small group of states that had appealed the plan immediately hailed the ruling. "This is a seismic victory for justice and accountability that will reopen the deeply flawed Purdue

Continued on Page A21



INTERNATIONAL A4-11

A Paradise in a Conflict Zone

Missile batteries planned for the Japanese island of Ishigaki reflect a shift in Japan's views on China. PAGE A10

Alpine Air, Forests and Covid

Bolzano, a province where many prefer herbal remedies and reject vaccines, has Italy's highest infection rate. PAGE A4

NATIONAL A12-23

Solitary Confinement Returns

Mayor-elect Eric Adams, who named a new jails commissioner, said he would embrace a punishment that his predecessor had curbed. PAGE A23

Political Fight on Natural Gas

New York is the latest Democratic city aiming to fight climate change by ushering out gas stoves and furnaces in favor of electric alternatives. PAGE A13

Call to Reduce Nuclear Risk

A group of scientists including 21 Nobel laureates asked President Biden to declare that the U.S. would never be the first to use nuclear weapons. PAGE A16



WEEKEND ARTS C1-24

The Top Books of 2021

The Times's staff critics present their choices for the best fiction and nonfiction works of the year. PAGE C16

Boundless Creativity

Holland Cotter visits not-to-be-missed shows that expand the horizons of Latin American and Latino art. PAGE C1

BUSINESS B1-6

Ex-Chief Repays \$105 Million

McDonald's settlement with Steve Easterbrook, who was ousted in 2019 over an inappropriate relationship, is one of the largest ever clawbacks of executive compensation. PAGE B1

Stigma of Résumé Gaps Fades

People who were out of work for a while have typically found it harder to get a job. The pandemic may have changed how employers view people who have been unemployed. PAGE B1

OPINION A24-25

Frank Bruni

PAGE A24



SPORTS B7-10

Growing Up After Gold

Chloe Kim won Olympic snowboarding gold at 17, but the sudden fame had its downsides. So she stepped back and built a life beyond the halpipse. PAGE B7



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MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

AT AGE 10, Jamal Hill found out he had Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a group of inherited disorders that cause nerve damage. He then learned to walk without revealing his condition.

COLUMN ONE

He found his truth, and now he's a Paralympian

After spending half his life hiding his disability, swimmer Jamal Hill won bronze for the United States in Tokyo

By THUC NHI NGUYEN

From Southern California to northeast Ohio, many watched Jamal Hill swim, but few actually saw him.

Hill is 6 feet 4 with a toothy grin, a lean torso and long, thin arms and legs ideal for propelling him through water as a world-class freestyler. When Hill walked in a room or pulled away from competitors in the pool, no one saw anything amiss. He wanted it that way. For more than 10 years, no one outside of a select group of family members knew his secret.

Then one day in 2018, his coach, Wilma Wong,

noticed how the Olympic hopeful used his arms to drag his legs out of the pool. He looked like her clients with cerebral palsy.

Was there something he wasn't telling her, Wong asked him.

"I felt seen in that moment," Hill said.

Hill smiled wide and revealed to his coach of one year that he was born with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a group of inherited disorders that cause nerve damage. While growing up in Inglewood, Hill hid his CMT from everyone, learning how to walk without giving [See Swimmer, A6]

Added urgency for abortion access bill

California lawmakers aim to push forward measure that would put end to copays.

By MELODY GUTIERREZ

SACRAMENTO — Ignited by threats to abortion rights across the country, California lawmakers are preparing countermeasures to expand access for those who live both in and out of the state, focusing first on resurrecting a bill that would eliminate costly copays for services.

The added urgency for abortion access legislation comes as the U.S. Supreme Court considers overturning

Regulators loosen a key restriction

U.S. health officials have lifted the in-person requirement for obtaining abortion pills. **NATION, A4**

Roe vs. Wade, the landmark decision that barred states from banning abortions nearly 50 years ago. Last week, the Supreme Court declined to block a Texas law that banned terminating pregnancies after six weeks.

Abortion rights advocates counted one win Thursday when the federal government announced it would allow patients to receive abortion pills pre- [See Abortion, A6]



WALLY SKALIZ Los Angeles Times

CHARGERS LOSE IN OT

Kansas City's Travis Kelce receives a 4th-quarter TD pass. He caught another in overtime to defeat L.A. at SoFi Stadium 34-28. **SPORTS, B10**

3 are awarded Medal of Honor

President lauds the "selfless service" of the Army soldiers, two of whom were killed in combat. **NATION, A4**

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 65/42. **B6**



Dual variants may soon fill hospital beds

Conditions could lead to 'a perfect storm for overwhelming' a system already taxed.

By RONG-GONG LIN II
AND EMILY ALPERT REYES

SAN FRANCISCO — The rapid growth of Omicron is prompting officials to warn that hospitals could easily become overwhelmed, potentially within weeks, as they deal with a combination of the newest variant of the coronavirus along with patients hit by a holiday wave of the Delta strain.

California and the rest of the nation now face a formidable winter. According to the state's COVID forecasting models, there are plausible scenarios in which a winter surge could hit hospitals worse than the summer Delta wave, which strained facilities across swaths of the state.

The combination is "a perfect storm for overwhelming our hospital system that is already strained," said Dr. Regina Chinisio-Kwong, a deputy health officer for Orange County.

Countermeasures against Omicron

Nation is cobbling together a response amid fatigue with pandemic rules. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**

New rules for state's workers

Even the vaccinated will have to stay home after contact with those infected. **BUSINESS, A5**

25 Rams players are on COVID list

Outbreak could affect the status of Sunday's scheduled game against Seattle. **SPORTS, B6**

So far, the year-end spike in Delta has been nowhere as severe as the rise a year ago.

Still, hospitals face new challenges that they didn't last year, when California ordered regional stay-at-home orders affecting most of the state. This December, hospitals are coping with a significant [See Variants, A7]

OMICRON MAY HAVE A SILVER LINING

A milder variant could signal the end of pandemic, but not all experts are optimistic.

By MELISSA HEALY

In the weeks since the Omicron variant made its presence known, scientists have braced themselves for yet another nasty surprise from a virus that has killed more than 5.3 million and sickened hundreds of millions more. But as they sort through preliminary data on the strain, they're cautiously considering an unexpected possibility: that with Omicron, the coronavirus may finally be cutting humanity a little slack.

There's still plenty of reason to worry: Omicron has spread to at least 77 countries, found its way to at least 35 U.S. states, and is on track to become the dominant strain in Europe by mid-January.

According to a raft of lab tests and population studies in South Africa, [See Omicron, A7]



KENT NISHIMURA Los Angeles Times

SEN. JOE MANCHIN III has raised fresh concerns about the package, much to his party's frustration.

Democrats' hopes for holiday fade

As Christmas deadline nears, 2 party centrists continue to hold up social and climate bill.

By JENNIFER HABERKORN
AND ELI STOKOLS

WASHINGTON — Democrats' hopes of pushing their social spending and climate bill through the Senate by Christmas are faltering amid intraparty division, a potentially significant setback for President Biden's top legislative priority.

Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) had set Christmas as his deadline to advance the bill through the Senate. But with the vote tally falling short and important procedural work still to be done,

the emerging reality on Capitol Hill is that the holiday deadline will slip, leaving Democrats with no choice but to come back in January and try again.

Biden conceded as much in a statement Thursday night, noting that "it takes time to finalize these agreements," but he expressed optimism.

"We will advance this work together over the days and weeks ahead. Leader Schumer and I are determined to see the bill successfully on the floor as early as possible," he said.

Missing Schumer's self-imposed deadline is not fatal for Biden's agenda. In the House, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) canceled planned votes on the bill more than once before it was approved. [See 'Build Back,' A9]

BUSINESS INSIDE: Amid holiday scam warnings, a grifter tries to hook a columnist. **A8**

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

SU V1 V2 V3 V4

Mostly cloudy 62/45 • Tomorrow: Cloudy 55/42 BS

Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2021 • \$2



Hussein Sami, 15, was diagnosed with cancer at age 2. Here, to protect his immune system, he isolates at home in Basra in July.

EMILYENNE MALFATTO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

In Iraq, stolen money, stolen hope

BY LOUISA LOVELUCK
AND MUSTAFA SALIM

BASRA, IRAQ — Basra's Children's Hospital was meant to be the best. After the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, first lady Laura Bush took a personal interest in its establishment as a world-class hospital for children with cancer, and the U.S. government spent more than \$100 million toward its completion.

Eighteen years later, the hospital is a casualty of an Iraqi health-care system so riddled with corruption and damaged by neglect that World Bank figures

The U.S. spent \$100 million building a hospital for children with cancer. Corruption ravaged it.

put it among the region's worst. After decades of war and sanctions battered the medical sector, today an army of crooks is robbing Iraqis of their aspirations for a healthy life, acknowledge former and current Iraqi officials.

Count 15-year-old Hussein Sami as one of the victims. From his bed in the oncology ward, he watched the doctor examining his medical chart. The physician's face quivered momentarily

as he tapped his finger on the section he was looking for.

Later, the doctor delivered a grim pronouncement to the teenager's father. "He's not responding to the treatment," he told him. "If you keep him in Iraq, there's no hope."

For the teenager in the hospital bed, so slender under his blanket that he looked no more than 10, corruption undercut his treatment and pushed medical bills so high that his family

risked bankruptcy. Medical devices he needed are often missing or out of service, doctors say. Prescriptions are padded with drugs that are neither required nor affordable.

Hussein, diagnosed with cancer at 2, was among the first patients at Children's Hospital when it opened in 2011, six years behind schedule. Hussein's family was relieved it was there. In Iraq, they had no access to the positron emission tomography scans that are vital for detecting diseased cells, so instead they had spent thousands of dollars to take the toddler to Jordan to

SEE IRAQ ON A13

Americans feel virus whiplash

AS OMICRON CASES RISE, CLOSURES RETURN

Many unsure how to assess and respond to risks

BY TYLER PAGER
AND DAN DIAMOND

With the omicron variant sending coronavirus cases spiking across the country, the pandemic is once again upending daily life and evoking the early days of the outbreak as scientists race to understand the still-unknown implications of this new type of coronavirus.

The worrying signs suddenly seem everywhere: Professional sports leagues are canceling games. Colleges are sending students home from campus. Secretary of State Antony Blinken cut short his trip to Southeast Asia.

With the number of omicron

cases appearing to double every two days, confirmed U.S. coronavirus infections have increased more than 50 percent in roughly two weeks, from 81,900 on Nov. 30 to 124,110 on Dec. 16, according to The Washington Post's rolling seven-day average.

After a briefing on the omicron variant from his coronavirus response team Thursday, President Biden warned that for unvaccinated Americans, "we are looking at a winter of severe illness and death." He added: "Omicron is here. It's going to start to spread."

SEE VIRUS ON A10

Vaccines: CDC recommends others over J&J, citing blood clots. **A10**

FDA relaxes restriction to obtain abortion pill

But stricter regulations in 19 states may make decision irrelevant

BY LAURIE MCGINLEY
AND KATIE SHEPHERD

The Biden administration on Thursday ended a long-standing restriction on a medication used to terminate early-stage pregnancies, even as politicians across the United States intensified efforts that represent the most serious challenge to abortion rights in decades.

The elimination of the rule by the Food and Drug Administration

means abortion pills can be prescribed through telehealth consultations with providers and mailed to patients in states where permitted by law. Previously, the pills could not be mailed, though that regulation had been temporarily suspended by the FDA.

In large swaths of the nation, however, strict state rules will dampen the impact. Several states ban sending abortion pills by mail and impose other restrictions.

The medication, mifepristone, was approved by the FDA in 2000 for what's known as medication abortion.

SEE ABORTION ON A6

Texas case: Supreme Court move frustrates law's opponents. **A6**

Wisconsin is new front line in war over the 2020 vote

BY ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN
AND JOSH DAWSEY

One of the investigators reexamining the 2020 election results in Wisconsin on behalf of the GOP-led state legislature is the president of a group that unsuccessfully sued to overturn the vote.

Another worked as a deputy in the White House Presidential Personnel Office, which was known for weeding out people perceived as disloyal to President Donald Trump.

A third is an Arkansas lawyer who represented Trump's campaign during last year's Wisconsin recount, a process that confirmed President Biden won the key swing state by roughly 20,700 votes.

All are being paid with Wisconsin taxpayer money as part of a legislative-backed investigation into the 2020 results headed by a

SEE WISCONSIN ON A4

Africa left with fallout of U.S. supply chain crisis

Container ships are bypassing many developing nations for trade lanes that favor the West

BY DAVID J. LYNCH
AND NEHA WADEKAR

As the world's largest cargo ships rush to the United States with all the clothes, furniture, toys and electronics that American consumers might want, Aditya Awtani is feeling neglected.

The chief executive of Mega Garment Industries Kenya, which supplies brands such as Calvin Klein and Izod, sometimes must wait more than two months — twice as long as usual — for shipments of the imported Chinese fabric he needs to make clothes in his high-ceilinged factory in Mombasa.

Awtani's problems getting raw materials into Kenya are mirrored by his troubles getting Mega shirts, pants and children's clothing out of the country. Shipping containers are scarce, since carriers often hurry them back to China, making it hard to plan and easy

SEE SUPPLY CHAIN ON A16



Employees sew clothes at the Mega Garment Industries factory in Mombasa, Kenya. The company has struggled to obtain raw materials in a timely manner, and freight costs have skyrocketed.

SARAH WADWA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Democrats face up to setbacks in grand plan

BY TONY ROMM

Senate Democrats on Thursday began to accept the prospect that they may not be able to adopt a roughly \$2 trillion package to overhaul the country's health care, education, climate, immigration and tax laws before the end of this year, threatening a major political setback for the final piece of President Biden's economic agenda.

The acknowledgment in Capitol Hill after months of negotiations — some even involving Biden personally — generated fresh frustration among a party struggling to overcome its own divisions and finalize a measure that has bedeviled them now for nearly a year. And it raised the

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A20

Delay: Manchin may stall Biden bill over drilling ban. **A20**

IN THE NEWS



AUSTIN ANTHONY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A time for unity As President Biden toured tornado-battered Kentucky, many in a conservative county welcomed the visit. **A8**

Purdue Pharma A federal judge overturned a bankruptcy settlement that shielded members of the Sackler family from opioid lawsuits. **A9**

THE NATION Executions and death sentences in the United States are at historic lows, according to statistics released by the Death Penalty Information Center. **A2**

Talks that would have awarded monetary settlements to families separated at the U.S.-Mexico border during the Trump administration have abruptly broken down, lawyers said. **A3**

The FAA has awarded the first \$3 billion in new airport infrastructure funds, money that could result in noticeable terminal and tar-

mac upgrades. **A11**

Harvard is extending for four years its policy allowing aspiring students to apply without SAT or ACT scores. **A19**

THE WORLD As Ukrainian and U.S. officials raise alarm over Russia massing significant forces along its border with Ukraine, the mood in Kyiv mostly amounts to a shrug. **A12**

Refugees from western Tigray in war-torn Ethiopia say they escaped the "final stage of ethnic cleansing." **A15**

THE ECONOMY A Reddit "antiwork" mob has focused its power into a real-world labor rights campaign against the cereal maker Kellogg's. **A18**

Facebook is notifying nearly 50,000 users that they may have been targeted for hacking by surveillance firms working for governments or private clients. **A22**

THE REGION Gov. Ralph Northam unveiled the final proposed budget of his term, with raises for Virginia public employees and tax cuts aimed at working families. **B1**

A consultant to Virginia Gov.-elect Glenn Youngkin traveled to see Donald Trump in Flori-

da in a bid to smooth out post-campaign tensions with the former president. **B1**

D.C. residents raise alarms about a recent rise in deadly traffic collisions involving children on city streets. **B1**

A Virginia judge ordered a hospital to allow a covid-19 patient to be treated with Ivermectin as her family asked. **B1**

Norfolk Democratic Del. Jerrauld C. "Jay" Jones surprised colleagues by announcing he will soon step down from the House. **B4**

Leaves are piling up on curbs in the District, where the government is behind on routine collection. **B5**

INSIDE



WEEKEND Season's drinking Festivity reigns supreme as holiday-themed bars make a comeback in the area after a pandemic-induced fade last winter.

STYLE Change of fortune A fawning 2014 magazine profile of Theranos's Elizabeth Holmes now might help send her to prison. **C1**

BUSINESS NEWSA18
COMICSC4
OPINION PAGESA23
LOTTERIESB3
OBITUARIESB6
TELEVISIONC8
WORLD NEWSA12

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0 70628 21100 3

espectáculos

Feinmann reemplazará a Marcelo Longobardi en Radio Mitre

Estará al frente de la franja más escuchada de la mañana con su programa *Alguien tiene que decirlo*, que se mueve de Radio Rivadavia a la nueva emisora.



DEL POTRO QUIERE REGRESAR EN BUENOS AIRES

—deportes

Inactivo desde junio de 2019, el tandilense anunció que tiene intenciones de jugar en el ATP porteño, en febrero del año próximo. **Página 6**

APLICARÁN UNA CUARTA DOSIS A DOS GRUPOS VULNERABLES

—coronavirus

Será para mayores de 50 años con esquema completo de Sinopharm y para personas inmunodeprimidas desde los 3; habían sido priorizados para la tercera. **Página 28**

LA NACION

VIERNES 17 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2021 | LANACION.COM.AR

Consejo de la Magistratura: la Corte anuló la reforma de Cristina

DECISIÓN UNÁNIME. La declaró inconstitucional y exhortó al Congreso a dictar una nueva ley; ordenó que, mientras tanto, se vuelva a un organismo de 20 integrantes, con el presidente del máximo tribunal a la cabeza, como fue hasta 2006

La Corte Suprema de Justicia declaró ayer inconstitucional la reforma del Consejo de la Magistratura que había impulsado Cristina Kirchner en 2006 cuando era senadora. El fallo, firmado por los cuatro integrantes del máximo tribunal, exhortó al Congreso a dictar una nueva ley en "un plazo razonable" y dispuso que hasta que se sancione

esa nueva norma la conformación vuelva a ser como antes de la modificación: con 20 integrantes y bajo la presidencia del titular de la Corte Suprema.

Para regresar a esa configuración, el Consejo tiene 120 días corridos a los fines de instrumentar la ampliación del cuerpo.

El argumento central para declarar

la inconstitucionalidad fue que la integración actual de 13 miembros no respeta el "equilibrio" entre los estamentos que exige la Constitución nacional.

El fallo era esperado por el Gobierno, que el lunes envió al Congreso un proyecto de modificación que lleva la integración del Consejo a 17 miembros. **Página 10**

CLAVES DEL FALLO

- Para la Corte, no se respetó el equilibrio constitucional
- Dio 120 días para volver al esquema de 20 miembros

EL ESCENARIO

Una Justicia reconfigurada

Paz Rodríguez Niell

Página 10

Condenan por fraude a Echegaray pero absuelven a López y De Sousa

GRUPO INDALO. El tribunal responsabilizó al funcionario de la AFIP de otorgar planes irregulares a la firma Oil Combustibles

El extitular de la AFIP Ricardo Echegaray fue condenado ayer a cuatro años y ocho meses de prisión y a la inhabilitación perpetua para ejercer cargos públicos, tras ser considerado autor de la maniobra de defraudación al Estado por el otorgamiento irregular de planes de pago a la firma Oil Combustibles, de los empresarios Cristóbal López y Fabián de Sousa. Por decisión de la mayoría del Tribunal Oral Federal 3, los dueños del Grupo Indalo, que eran acusa-

dos como partícipes necesarios, fueron absueltos. La decisión la tomaron por mayoría los jueces Javier Feliciano Ríos y Fernando Machado Pelloni. El juez federal Andrés Basso votó en disidencia y se inclinó por condenar a De Sousa y a López. La fiscalía había acreditado que existía una simetría entre las cifras que acumulaba Oil Combustibles en concepto de deuda al Estado y los montos que transfería como préstamos entre sus compañías. **Página 12**



Los cabileos entre Máximo Kirchner, Massa y De Pedro fueron permanentes

FABRÁN MARELLI

Sin tener los votos, el kirchnerismo forzó el debate del presupuesto

DIPUTADOS. El oficialismo no aceptó los cambios propuestos por la oposición

Tensión, expectativa e incertidumbre. Ese era el clima que reinaba anoche en la Cámara de Diputados cuando todavía era incierto el resultado de la sesión convocada por el oficialismo para discutir el proyecto de ley de presupuesto 2022. A pesar de que no tenían asegura-

dos los votos para su aprobación, los líderes del oficialismo Máximo Kirchner (jefe de bloque) y Sergio Massa (presidente de la Cámara) resolvieron no aceptar los cambios propuestos por la oposición y, tras un cuarto intermedio, apostaron a volcar voluntades a su favor a

lo largo del debate. Los bloques opositores se abroquelaron en el rechazo de la iniciativa.

En paralelo, la bancada de Juntos por el Cambio en el Senado resolvió no aceptar el tratamiento del proyecto sobre tablas, y la sesión pasaría para el jueves 29. **Página 20**

EL ANÁLISIS

Ante otro fallo judicial vergonzoso

Joaquín Morales Solá

—LA NACION—

Página 13

EL ESCENARIO

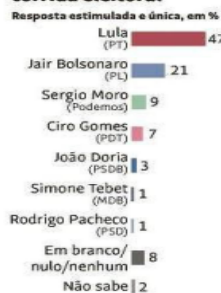
Quedó probado que no fue lawfare

Hugo Alconada Mon

—LA NACION—

Página 16

Lula lidera corrida eleitoral



Aldo Rebelo (sem partido) 0
Alessandro Vieira (Cidadania) 0
Felipe d'Ávila (Novo) 0

60% dizem que não votariam em Bolsonaro de jeito nenhum



Fonte: Pesquisa Datafolha

Lula tem 47% contra 21% de Bolsonaro, mostra Datafolha

Ex-presidente venceria no primeiro turno se eleição fosse hoje; Moro (9%) e Ciro (7%) vêm depois

O ex-presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva venceria a eleição presidencial no primeiro turno caso ela ocorresse hoje, indica pesquisa Datafolha. O petista aparece com 47% das preferências, e Jair Bolsonaro (PL), o atual ocupante do cargo, com 21%.

Ambos estão muito à frente dos nomes da "terceira via", que se colocam como alternativa à polarização: o ex-juiz Sergio Moro (Podemos) tem 9% das intenções; o ex-ministro Ciro Gomes (PDT), 7%, e o governador paulista, João Dória (PSDB), 3%.

O levantamento, feito presencialmente com 3.666 pessoas acima de 16 anos do dia 13 ao dia 16 deste mês em 191 cidades do país, tem margem de erro de dois pontos percentuais em qualquer direção e avaliou também cenários de segundo turno.

Na simulação de uma disputa entre Lula e Bolsonaro, o petista derrotaria o titular por 59% a 30%. O ex-presidente também venceria Moro (57% a 31%), Ciro (56% a 26%) e Dória (60% a 20%). Bolsonaro perderia para qualquer um dos quatro.

O presidente tem a maior rejeição: 60%; Lula e Dória são descartados por 34%, e Moro, por 30%. Poder A4

Análise
M. Paulino e A. Janoni
Fidelidade a Lula e Bolsonaro reduz espaço para 3ª via A8

Anvisa libera vacinação em crianças

A Anvisa autorizou ontem o uso da vacina da Pfizer para imunizar crianças a partir de cinco anos contra a Covid. Até então, o produto tinha aplicação permitida no país só em maiores de 12 anos.

Caberá ao Ministério da Saúde decidir quando iniciar a vacinação. Isso não deve ocorrer imediatamente porque a pasta ainda não solicitou a compra de doses específicas para a faixa etária.

A resolução prevê que as crianças recebam duas doses num intervalo de 21 dias.

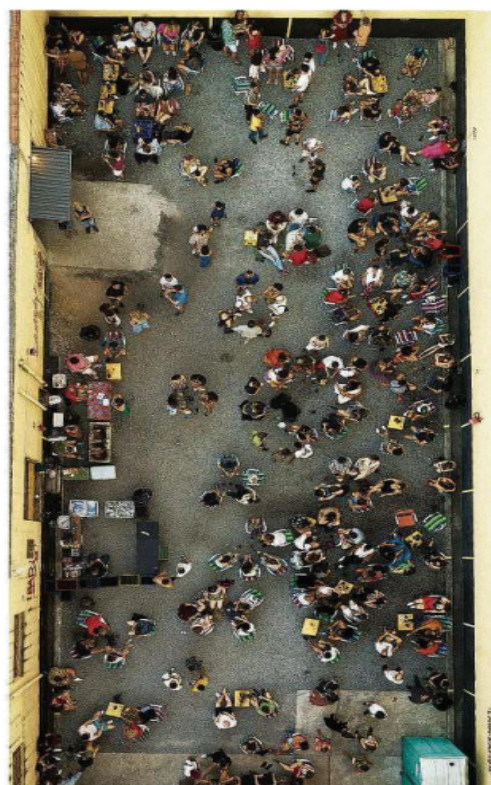
Em live, Jair Bolsonaro pediu a divulgação dos nomes dos técnicos da agência que deram aval ao uso. Saúde B1

Guedes pede R\$ 2,5 bilhões para reajustes de servidores

O ministro Paulo Guedes (Economia) pediu ao Congresso R\$ 2,5 bilhões do Orçamento de 2022 para reajustes salariais do funcionalismo, cedendo a pedidos de Jair Bolsonaro, que concorre à reeleição no próximo ano, relata Idiana Tomazelli. O ofício obtido pela Folha não cita os contemplados, mas o presidente corteja corporações policiais. Mercado A15

FMI anuncia que fechará escritório no Brasil em 2022

O Fundo Monetário Internacional vai fechar seu escritório no Brasil após o ministro Paulo Guedes dizer que o governo não precisa dele. Aberta em 1999, quando o país recebia ajuda financeira, a representação será desfeita no próximo semestre. Mercado A17



Ronny Santos/Folhapress

BARRA FUNDA, A NOVA SANTA CECÍLIA

Movimento no bar Miúda, na praça Olavo Bilac; antigo bairro industrial paulistano vira polo de artes e design e ferve com casas modernas que atraem público mais jovem. Guia C11 e C12

Aéreas já exigem passaporte vacinal em embarque

Saúde B2

Mendonça defende democracia após posse no Supremo

Na primeira declaração como ministro do STF, André Mendonça disse que pretende ajudar a "consolidar a democracia" e fez gestos à imprensa, afirmando que ela pode contar com seu respeito. Os acenos destoam da postura habitual de Jair Bolsonaro. Poder A10

Eduardo Giannetti é eleito imortal da ABL

Economista foi escolhido para ocupar a última cadeira que estava aberta. C2

Ilustrada C2

Bruce Springsteen vende direitos de catálogo musical por US\$ 500 milhões

Imunizante contra nova gripe só chegará em março de 2022

Saúde B2



Mendonça em culto com Bolsonaro após posse no STF

Em rádio, Ratinho sugere metralhar deputada do PT

Poder A8

Ilustrada C1

Música lo-fi tenta criar silêncio na era do barulho e ajudar a estudar e dormir

Esporte B6

Advogado do caso Mariana Ferrer é candidato a chefe de entidade de hipismo

EDITORIAIS A2

Quase na mesma
Sobre corrida presidencial, segundo o Datafolha.

Trancos e barrancos
Acerca de providências para o combate à pandemia.

ATMOSFERA



Fonte: www.climatempo.com.br

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Tatiana Prazeres

Mudanças de 2021 pesarão no futuro da China

A China se prepara para um cenário internacional mais resistente à sua ascensão. Ao mesmo tempo, reforça seus vínculos com a Rússia e o mundo em desenvolvimento. Mundo A14

HOTÉIS? É na

123 milhas



Hugo Javier está imputado y ya empezó con chicanas para dilatar su proceso

Justicia tiene en sus manos evitar impunidad en Central

Desde el Poder Ejecutivo se ratificaron en que el colorado cometió delitos en el manejo de los fondos Covid. Existen tres causas abiertas contra el gobernador en la Fiscalía.

PÁGINAS 4 y 5

Denuncia de víctima no corre
**Senado aprueba
CBI para investigar
uso de la Justicia
en aprietes de RGD**

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Técnicos dan voz de alerta
**Brasil puede bajar
tarifa de Itaipú por
la vía de los hechos
consumados**

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Policía abatió a un
miembro de banda
criminal ACA y
detuvo a otros tres

PÁGINA 42



Multitud. La Miss Universo Paraguay fue recibida por cientos de admiradores, a su regreso al país.

PÁGINAS 24 y 25

CON ESTA EDICIÓN



DECORACIÓN DE
TORTAS 2

Diana +
Eusebio

COMPRA OPCIONAL



MOTOS DE
COMPETICIÓN 11

G. 40.000

La amenaza puede ser muy significativa
**Ómicron se multiplica 70
veces más rápido que delta**

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Supuesto pedido a la defensa de Messer
**Ex secretario de Villamayor a
juicio por solicitud de coima**

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LE FIGARO

« Sans la liberté de blâmer, il n'est point d'éloge flatteur » Beaumarchais



EXPOSITION
À ROME, PLONGÉE DANS
LES CERCLES DE L'ENFER
DE DANTE PAGES 30 ET 31

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LE GLADIATEUR DE PAPIER
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oppose une fin
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« Si je pouvais
avoir dix ans
de plus chez
les Bleus, ce serait
l'idéal » PAGE 15

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Bruce Springsteen,
la rock star
qui valait un demi-
milliard de dollars
pour Sony Music
PAGE 28

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Cahart et de
Frédéric Douet
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de Guillaume
Perrault
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**FIGARO OUI
FIGARO NON**

**Réponses à la question
de jeudi :**
Le Covid a-t-il changé
vos projets pour
les vacances de Noël ?

OUI 27% NON 73%
TOTAL DE VOTANTS : 174 488

**Votez aujourd'hui
sur lefigaro.fr**
Lignes TGV :
approuvez-vous
l'ouverture à la
concurrence européenne ?

BRIDGEMAN IMAGES/LISBONA, MUSEU
NACIONAL DE ARTE-CASTERMAN

SNCF : la CGT échoue dans sa stratégie de blocage total

Les syndicats ont levé leur préavis de grève jeudi après-midi, mais trop tardivement pour empêcher l'annulation des trains vendredi. Le trafic sera proche de la normale ce week-end.

Le groupe ferroviaire va verser de grosses primes aux conducteurs de l'axe Sud-Est pour éviter un mouvement social ce week-end. Mais un TGV sur deux sera quand même supprimé vendredi. 50 000 passagers ne pourront donc pas voyager. Cet épisode illustre la tension sociale qui règne au sein de l'entreprise. La CGT, avec 34% des voix aux élections, cherche à gonfler les muscles après deux ans d'atonie à cause de la crise sanitaire. Et son patron, Laurent Brun, qui campe sur une ligne dure, a besoin de montrer que son positionnement est gagnant. Mais la CGT s'est heurtée à une direction qui s'est raidie après avoir lâché rapidement du lest. Le syndicat a surtout été rappelé à l'ordre par ses troupes, qui craignaient de voir la prime de 600 euros pour les conducteurs et de 300 euros pour les contrôleurs leur passer sous le nez. Un résultat en demi-teinte pour un syndicat peu habitué à faire volte-face en moins de vingt-quatre heures.

→ LE COVOITURAGE, ALTERNATIVE LA PLUS SOLlicitÉE PAR LES NAUFRAGÉS DU RAIL → TRENITALIA, QUI LANCE SAMEDI SES TGV PARIS-LYON, PROFITE D'UNE PUBLICITÉ GRATUITE → DES AVANTAGES ENCORE CONSÉQUENTS, MAIS QUI VONT S'AMENUISER PAGES 22, 23 ET L'EDITORIAL

**Kim Jong-un,
10 ans
de pouvoir
absolu
à la tête d'une
dictature
nucléaire**



Le maître de la Corée du Nord, qui hérita à 26 ans de la dernière dictature stalinienne, a fait mentir les pronostics en une décennie, imposant son emprise et défiant Washington avec un arsenal nucléaire toujours plus sophistiqué. PAGES 12 ET 13

**Le forcing
médiatique
d'Emmanuel
Macron
avant Noël**

Après sa grande conférence de presse sur l'Europe la semaine dernière, après son grand entretien télévisé sur TF1 mercredi, c'est sur RTL que le président de la République s'apprête ce vendredi à compléter son dispositif de saturation médiatique avant les vacances de Noël. C'est la « stratégie de la dinde de Noël » : se placer au cœur des sujets de conversation au moment où la cristallisation des opinions commence à s'opérer, parfois en famille, lors des deux réveillons de fin d'année. PAGES 2, 3 ET 19

ÉDITORIAL par Jacques-Olivier Martin jomartin@lefigaro.fr

La machine infernale

À la SNCF, le monde d'après ressemble furieusement au monde d'avant. Comme au bon vieux temps, les cheminots déposent des préavis de grève à la veille des départs en vacances. Comme au bon vieux temps, leurs intérêts particuliers et le corporatisme de quelques-uns priment sur l'intérêt collectif. Rien de bien neuf, l'écoeurement général en prime. Car, même si les durs de la CGT ou de SUD ont fait machine arrière au dernier moment, le mal est fait : des milliers de voyageurs sont privés de train ce vendredi de grand départ. Ce vrai faux débrayage de l'Avent ne passe pas, surtout cet hiver. Après bientôt deux ans de Covid, des confinements à répétition, une cinquième vague d'épidémie, un nouveau variant, les Français sont lessivés et n'aspirent qu'à se retrouver en famille, avec leurs parents, leurs enfants, leurs cousins, ici et là, pour une messe de Noël, un repas de fêtes, des rires, de la détente. Non, décidément, on ne peut pas accorder de circonstances atténuantes à ces salariés protégés et syndiqués qui jouent les trouble-fêtes au mépris de tous, des usagers, de leur entreprise, de l'État, qui a déversé plus de 4 mil-

liards d'euros en pleine crise sanitaire pour empêcher la faillite.

Les cheminots ont exigé des primes et des majorations pour compenser l'inflation, la hausse du coût de la vie, le Covid... si facilement accordées par leur direction que la CGT et SUD-rail en ont redemandé. C'est tellement simple de surenchérir lorsque l'on tient le sifflet du départ des trains de Noël...

Depuis des décennies, la maison Martinez fait la loi au sein du transporteur ferroviaire en agitant le bâton du débrayage en guise de préalable à toute négociation. On l'a vue à l'œuvre lors de la réforme de la SNCF en 2018, puis l'année suivante lorsque Édouard Philippe a tenté sans succès le « big bang des retraites ». On la voit aujourd'hui...

Pour quel résultat ? Une entreprise terriblement affaiblie au moment même où elle doit affronter l'arrivée de concurrents sur les lignes de TGV, et des clients insatisfaits et exaspérés qui finiront vite par préférer Trenitalia ou un autre transporteur ferroviaire pour partir en vacances... Ce jour-là, il sera trop tard pour la SNCF. ■

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Sunak forced to return to UK for crisis talks amid Omicron surge

Pressure on chancellor to help hospitality firms hit by cancellations

Aubrey Allegretti
Rob Davies
Heather Stewart

Rishi Sunak was forced to cut short a trip to California and fly back to London last night to draw up an

emergency rescue package for hospitality firms hit by Christmas cancellations as the Omicron wave grows. The chancellor held crisis talks with struggling firms by video-link from the US after Labour accused him of being "missing in action".

He returns to the Treasury today – a day earlier than he had intended – under intense pressure to announce emergency financial help.

The scramble came as Covid cases jumped to a historic high in Britain yesterday, following a warning from

England's chief medical officer, Chris Whitty, that people should limit social contact to improve chances of spending Christmas Day with relatives.

Business leaders warned that firms would not survive the winter without an urgent intervention from the government, blaming a change in messaging as ministers try to suppress Omicron's spread without directly imposing restrictions.

Among measures called for are a reintroduction of the VAT cut for hospitality, expansion of business rates

'[The government] is frightening everybody into staying home but not providing support for affected businesses'

Chris Jowsey
CEO, Admiral Taverns

relief, immediate grants for firms in the hardest-hit sectors and a targeted return of the furlough scheme to allow firms to keep staff on.

Treasury sources indicated it was not clear yet which requests would be an effective use of taxpayers' money, suggesting an announcement was not likely in the next 24 hours.

A government insider said one of Sunak's priorities on his return would be to unblock £250m held by local authorities in the additional restrictions grant

PM joined No 10 pizza party during first lockdown, sources say

Exclusive
Peter Walker
Rowena Mason

Boris Johnson joined No 10 staff for a party in Downing Street during the first lockdown in May last year, sources have alleged, raising questions about whether there was a culture of flouting the rules over a number of months.

The prime minister spent about 15 minutes with staff at the alleged social gathering on 15 May 2020, telling one aide in No 10 they deserved a drink for "beating back" coronavirus, a joint investigation by the Guardian and Independent was told.

Sources claimed about 20 staff drank wine and spirits and ate pizza following a press conference that day, some in offices inside No 10 and others going into the garden. Some staff stayed drinking until late into the evening, they alleged.

Rules at the time allowed only two people from different households to meet outside, at a distance of 2 metres. Earlier that



▲ Boris Johnson stepping out of No 10 yesterday. Following reports of rule-breaching Christmas parties there and elsewhere, sources say he attended a party at Downing Street in the first lockdown last year PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

Inflation concern prompts rate rise

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

The Bank of England has unexpectedly raised interest rates for the first time in three years amid growing concerns over inflation, despite the rapid spread of Omicron.

The Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) voted eight to one to raise rates from a historical low of 0.1% to 0.25%, judging that the surging cost of living outweighed risks to the economy from the Covid variant.

The increase will add to financial pressure on households with variable-rate mortgages and hit firms with higher borrowing costs, and comes after the government cut universal credit and announced plans to raise taxes from the spring.

With inflation at its highest rate for a decade,



15 ➔

8 ➔