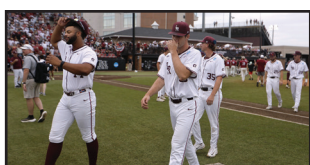


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Arkansas Democrat Gazette

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In the news

Ayanna Howard, the dean of Ohio State University's engineering college and appointee to the federal government's National Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee, was chosen to be the next president of Spelman College in Atlanta, a historically Black liberal arts institution for women.

Yazid Abubakar, a police spokesman in north-west Nigeria, said in a statement efforts were underway to rescue six students who were kidnapped at gunpoint from an off-campus residence in the Kaura Namoda area of Zamfara state.

Angel Guzman, 31, of Los Angeles, was among the four members of the gang MS-13 convicted of murdering three people, one of whom was kidnapped, strangled, attacked with machetes and dismembered, in the Angeles National Forest, federal authorities said.

Reid Hoffman, a co-founder of LinkedIn who joined Microsoft's board in 2017, said in a podcast interview with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella he would not run for reelection to the body because a startup he co-founded was progressing in its efforts to use artificial intelligence to improve cancer treatment.

Aaron Kelly, co-director of the Center for Pediatric Obesity Medicine at the University of Minnesota, said security and police officers "physically" forced him and four other researchers out of a conference hosted by the American Diabetes Association and confiscated their lanyards, revoking access to the event.

Haruna Sani, a Nigerian army spokesman, said the counterattack on Islamic militants who fired upon a base in the Biu area of Borno state, killing five soldiers, "reflects the courage and determination of our troops across the theatre."

Jesse Ridgway, a YouTuber, and his wife, Ashley, said they've received death threats after sharing online that they decided to terminate a pregnancy once a test revealed the presence of Trisomy 21, a form of Down syndrome.

Rocky Chau, 37, of Richmond, Calif., said he participated in a 2024 protest on the Golden Gate Bridge to "send a message and get the United States government to stop the genocide (in Gaza)."

Peter Phillips, the son of British King Charles III's sister Princess Anne, married Harriet Sperling, a nurse working for the National Health Service, in a church ceremony in the village of Kemble.



People walk under a banner Saturday showing portraits of the late revolutionary founder Ayatollah Khomeini (left) and the slain Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28, in Tehran, Iran. (AP/Vahid Salemi)

Gulf states urge Iran cease targeting them

SAMY MAGDY AND MICHELLE L. PRICE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO — Iran fired ballistic missiles and drones toward Bahrain and Kuwait that were intercepted early Saturday, Bahrain's government said, and called on Tehran to halt attacks on Gulf neighbors that test a fragile ceasefire in the Middle East conflict.

Iran said that it targeted American military assets in both countries, after the U.S.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES in Lebanon kill nine. Page 11A.

REPORT: IRAN'S nuclear material unverified. Page 11A.

attacked surveillance facilities on Qeshm Island and near Sirik that Iran said were used to protect borders and "ensure the security of navigation in international waters." Tehran called the attack a ceasefire violation.

The latest exchange of fire

came as the Trump administration presses Iran to make a deal to end the war, which has strained the global economy and threatened a hunger crisis in some of the world's most vulnerable countries.

Pakistan's interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi, arrived in Iran on Saturday as part of mediation efforts.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is seeking to ratchet up economic pressure on Iran. The U.S. Treasury Department is

See IRAN, Page 11A



Construction continues on Monday at Google's more than 1,100-acre data center site in West Memphis. (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Colin Murphey)

West Memphis braced for boom

Google's data center plans, partnership see welcome from city

BILL BOWDEN ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE WEST MEMPHIS — This east Arkansas city might seem like an unlikely place for Elon Musk and Google to be scrambling for a data center site.

But they were, until Musk backed out.

"As soon as Musk went, Google stepped in right behind him," said Ward Wimbish, the economic develop-

DATA CENTER concerns addressed at meeting. Page 1B.

ment director for West Memphis. "We said, 'We've got a project ahead of you. They have an option on the land.' And they said, 'Well, let us know if it doesn't work out.'"

Google last fall announced a \$4 billion investment in its West Memphis data center through 2027, but the final



This coverage was made possible by donations to the ADG Community Journalism Project.

total could amount to much more. The West Memphis City Council approved a maximum of \$60 billion in industrial development bonds over 30 years — \$10 billion for the real estate and \$50 billion for the personal prop-

erty, which would include computer equipment.

Construction began in October on the first of a possible five buildings at the site in the city's industrial park south of town.

"Current development plans are confirmed for two buildings, with the potential to expand," said Laurel Brown, public affairs manager for Google. "Initial build-

See CENTER, Page 10A

Pulaski official OKs \$4M to friend's firm

Hutchens details KNP's work since '21

BRETT BARROQUERE ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE The connection extends more than 30 years, through college, weddings, time hunting together and a signature scrawled on one document after another.

Since 2021, Pulaski County Comptroller Michael Hutchens has authorized payments of more than \$4 million to KNP LLC, a Conway painting company founded by his University of Central Arkansas classmate Steve Presley. Both last attended the school in 1993, according to online posts.

"However many years that's been," Hutchens said, "I've gotten to know him."

When Hutchens remarried in 2020, Presley stood watching at the comptroller's side. When Presley's son Lake married two years later, Hutchens was in the wedding party. An image from the nuptials depicts Hutchens beaming alongside Steve Presley as Lake kisses his bride. A video posted in 2023 on Hutchens' TikTok account showed Steve Presley clad in camouflage, clutching a rifle as he lay in

See KNP, Page 4A



People walk through the rotunda of the Pulaski County Courthouse in Little Rock on Tuesday. County Comptroller Michael Hutchens said contractor KNP has proven its ability to do painting work within the restrictions that he said apply to the historic building. (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Colin Murphey)

Deportation push spikes immigration courts' caseloads

JAZMINE ULLOA AND HAMED ALEAZIZ THE NEW YORK TIMES

CHICAGO — Federal officials have quietly begun fast-tracking cases through immigration courts, pushing dozens of additional cases on to the dockets on certain days

in an effort to more quickly process asylum and other claims.

The fast-tracking, which is also intended to increase the pace of deportations, started without any formal notification or announcement from the Trump administration,

according to immigration lawyers and court officials interviewed by The New York Times. But a surge of cases has been apparent in numerous courts around the country. Some judges have seen their caseloads double and triple, prompting worries

that cases are being rushed through, violating due process rights.

At separate courthouses in Annandale and Sterling, Va., in recent days, Times reporters observed long lines and packed dockets. Some immigration judges saw their case-

loads more than double, with as many as 100 adults waiting for their cases to be heard. In Annandale, the caseloads have included dozens of unaccompanied minors.

Lines were also evident at a courthouse in downtown See COURTS, Page 11A

WEATHER LITTLE ROCK TODAY TONIGHT HIGH 85 LOW 74

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