

Tampa Bay Times

FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER

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★★★ Saturday, March 21, 2026

US sends more Marines to Mideast

A cleric beats his chest as he mourns during the funeral procession of Iran's intelligence minister Esmail Khatib and, according to Iranian officials, his wife and daughter, in Tehran, Iran, on Friday.



(VAHID SALEMI | AP)

Iran threatens recreational and tourism sites around the world as President Trump hints at wind-down.

BY JON GAMBRELL, MICHELLE L. PRICE AND JULIE WATSON
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Three weeks into an escalating war in the Middle East, Iran threatened Friday to expand its retaliatory attacks to include recreational and tourist sites worldwide, as the U.S. announced it was sending more warships and Marines to the region.

Hours later, President Donald

Trump said on social media that his administration in fact was considering “winding down” military operations in the region. His post came after another climb in oil prices sent the U.S. stock market sharply lower.

The mixed messages came as the war has shown no signs of abating.

As Israeli airstrikes landed in Tehran, Iran, launched more attacks on Israel and energy sites

in neighboring Gulf Arab states, and the region marked one of the holiest days on the Muslim calendar. Iranians were also celebrating the Persian New Year, known as Nowruz, a normally festive holiday.

With little information coming out of Iran, it was not clear how much damage its arms, nuclear or energy facilities have sustained in the punishing U.S. and Israeli **See IRAN, 2A**

[NCAA TOURNAMENT]



The NCAA March Madness logo is visible at center court during opening tip-off as the Clemson Tigers take on the Iowa Hawkeyes during first-round action Friday night at Benchmark International Arena. (Photos by DIRK SHADD | Times)

FROM HOCKEY TO HOOPS

Benchmark International Arena has been rocking this season with the home team, the NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning, among the top teams in the league as the regular season rapidly approaches the playoffs. But a different kind of madness has overtaken the arena this weekend. March Madness. Eight teams began their NCAA Tournament journey Friday in Tampa in front of frenzied crowds as the first round of the men's basketball showcase began. **More in Sports, 1C**



Emily McCollum, center, cheers on her Iowa Hawkeyes. McCollum's brother-in-law, Ben McCollum, is Iowa's head coach. At left is Kim Wheeler, mother of assistant coach Connor Wheeler, and at right is Michelle McCollum, wife of the head coach.

POLITIFACT

What Fla. bill means for noncitizens seeking licenses

Some immigration law experts worry it could dissuade people from getting or renewing their state IDs for fear of discrimination.

BY MARIA BRICEÑO
PolitiFact

If a Florida elections bill goes into effect, driver's licenses will soon include a new notable fact: whether a person is a U.S. citizen.

Supporters of HB 991, approved by Florida's Legislature and expected to be signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, say the bill will ensure that only eligible U.S. citizens vote. Critics worry it will disenfranchise eligible voters who are unable to meet the bill's demands.

Florida voters will be required to provide photo identification, such as an active U.S. passport or a Florida driver's license, at the polls before being allowed to vote. It prohibits the use of student and retirement center IDs, which Florida has deemed to be acceptable forms of voting identification since the early 2000s.

HB 991 requires that Florida driver's licenses and state-issued ID cards indicate people's citizenship status. The bill would take effect Jan. 1. The bill is similar to the federally proposed legislation, the SAVE America Act, awaiting a Senate vote.

Federal law already prohibits noncitizens from voting in federal elections, and cases of noncitizens voting **See POLITIFACT, 3A**

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The Sunshine Skyway northern fishing pier is seen in St. Petersburg in 2023. The state will rebuild the southern pier in Manatee County and repair the northern pier in Pinellas to extend its lifespan by 20 years, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Thursday. (DIRK SHADD | Times, 2023)

'A major draw': DeSantis announces plan to build new Skyway fishing pier

About 0.6 miles of the 2-mile southern pier in Manatee County closed in October due to storm damage from Hurricane Milton.

BY CARTER WEINHOFER
Bradenton Herald (TNS)

The state of Florida will soon reconstruct the Sunshine Skyway fishing piers, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Thursday.

At a news conference in Bradenton — where DeSantis signed two environmental bills — the governor also announced a project to build a new fishing pier on the south side of the Bob Gra-

ham Sunshine Skyway Bridge. The existing pier on the Pinellas County side will also be renovated as part of the project.

After an infamous ship crash in 1980 that killed 35 people, the Skyway bridge was replaced, and the ends of the old bridge were repurposed as the two Tampa Bay fishing piers.

“While fishing is a major draw, **See PIER, 2A**