JUNETEENTH

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Hot days ahead for Tampa Bay

The heat index will be the triple digits, with further heat advisories possible.

BY MICHAELA MULLIGAN
Times Staff Writer

Sweet, sweet AC will be Tampa Bay's friend this weekend as dangerously hot temperatures settle in.

The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory Thursday, when feels-like temperatures were predicted to reach 110 degrees. And while Thursday was likely to be the hottest day of the week, the weekend will be no walk in the ice cream shop.

Heat indices — a combination of how air temperature and humidity feel to the human body — are likely to reach 105 degrees or above today. The weekend also is likely to reach feels-like temperatures over 100 degrees.

Tampa announced it would open cooling centers across the city for anyone looking for relief.

"Florida, during the summer, it's a very thin line from heat advisory to average summertime temperatures," said Stephen Shiveley, a meteorologist for the weather service's Tampa Bay office.

Thursday's heat advisory was the first of the year. A weather service forecast said more advisories could come this weekend.

For the weather service to issue an advisory, the heat index needs to be expected to reach 108 degrees.

See HEAT, 2A

Florida's AIDS drugs program may be in trouble

A new report casts doubt on its sustainability at current levels.

BY ANA GOÑI-LESSAN
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Lawmakers acted early this year to save a key AIDS drug program from drastic cuts, but a new report from the state released Monday indicates the program remains in peril.

A report by the Florida Department of Health argues the state won't be able to secure enough funds for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program if it continues to serve people at 400% of the poverty level.

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program, funded by a combination of state money, federal grants and pharmaceutical rebates, has faced cuts and dropped participants since the state said the federal government reduced funds for the program and therefore had to lower the threshold for eligibility.

According to the report, annual pharmaceutical rebates have ranged from $158 million to $200 million. But for the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the state

See AIDS, 2A

Correction

A story in Thursday's e-newspaper incorrectly named the interim superintendent of Hillsborough County in 1966-67. The superintendent's name is Calvert Craig.

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Hegseth attacks NATO allies, to review US role

The defense chief blistered alliance members for refusing U.S. access to bases to launch strikes on Iran.

BY LORNE COOK
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth lashed out at NATO allies on Thursday as he announced a six-month Pentagon review of American forces in Europe whose outcome will depend on how fast the Europeans take responsibility for their own security.

The review was yet another surprise for European allies and Canada as they learn to deal with an increasingly unpredictable ally. U.S. officials and senior military officers had promised to coordinate closely with the Europeans as America draws down.

In recent months, U.S. President Donald Trump and the Pentagon have sent conflicting signals about whether America is reducing or increasing its military footprint in Europe, as well as threatening to annex Greenland, a semiautonomous island that is part of ally Denmark. Just weeks ago, the Trump administration said that it would no longer provide as much military support should any NATO member come under attack.

"This will be a real review. It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defense of Europe," Hegseth told his NATO counterparts. "It's a review that some countries will fail and others will pass with flying colors."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz later said the allies have long been aware of U.S. plans to pull troops from Europe at some point and that they must take care of their own security.

"We know that we must do more and we are doing it," Merz said.

See NATO, 9A

Hillsborough County celebrates its fifth annual Juneteenth flag-raising ceremony Thursday outside County Center. District 3 Commissioner Gwen Myers says the event is a celebration of freedom and a sign that the county is "standing strong."
(Photos by JEFFEREE WOO | Times)

Against political winds, Juneteenth flag flies high

Local elected officials, families and county workers gather to celebrate Juneteenth on Thursday in Hillsborough County.

BY CAMILA JOSE GOMEZ
Times Staff Writer

Hillsborough County Commissioner Gwen Myers remembers the first time the county raised its Juneteenth flag five years ago.

Hillsborough was the first in Florida to recognize Juneteenth after it became a federal holiday in 2021 and did so with a flag-raising ceremony before a small crowd of a few dozen people. They recognized the day Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, and told enslaved people there that they were freed, ending slavery in the country on June 19, 1865.

This year, about 300 people packed under tents during Thursday's scorching heat to watch the Juneteenth flag go up for the fifth time in front of Hillsborough County Center.

Organizers pointed to that growth as a sign of unwavering support even as the country's political climate has shifted.

See FLAG, 3A

Austin Guerrero Cruz, a senior with the Howard W. Blake High School Air Force Junior ROTC, presents the Juneteenth flag to Myers.

Vote on UF's next leader stalls over hiring authority

The Board of Governors chairman questions the power of the leader of the university's board.

BY LUCY MARQUES
Times Staff Writer

Despite getting close to locking in the next leader of Florida's top university, the school has hit a stumbling block.

The chairperson of the board that oversees Florida's university system wants to push back a vote to confirm the University of Florida's president-elect, citing what he called possible governance issues under UF's board chairperson, including questions over hiring practices and financial disclosures.

Alan Levine, chairperson of the Board of Governors, wrote in a letter to State University System Chancellor Ray Rodrigues on Wednesday that he believes a vote on Stuart Bell's confirmation, and other university matters, should be postponed.

While reviewing Bell's nomination ahead of the vote planned for June 24-25, Levine said he observed that the contract for interim president Donald Landry granted UF board chairperson Mori Hosseini "sweeping authority" to approve the hiring and

See UF, 3A