

The Minnesota Star Tribune

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Somalis face fast-tracked hearings

Asylum hearings on "rocket docket" are held largely in secret.

By CHRISTOPHER MAGAN
The Minnesota Star Tribune

The Fort Snelling Immigration Court is holding expedited online hearings, largely in secret, for Somali nationals with asylum claims.

Nicknamed the "rocket docket" by attorneys and court observers, the only public notice of these hearings is a sheet of paper pinned to a board each day in the lobby of immigration court in the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building. The dockets are often incomplete or inaccurate.

Everyone appears for the hearings remotely, and observers are rarely allowed. While

the immigrants who are the subject of the proceedings are in Minnesota, the judges and government attorneys are in other states.

The practice is the latest example of the diminishing transparency in courts operated by the Executive Office for Immigration Review since President Donald Trump returned to office promising mass deportations. At Fort Snelling, court

rooms are often locked, dockets are redacted and observers are restricted, contrary to federal law stipulating most hearings be open to the public.

Suleiman Adan, deputy executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said immigration officials have not provided an explanation about fast-tracked online hearings for Somali refugees. He noted that

family members are unable to observe the hearings.

"When hearings are expedited, families lose the ability to hire counsel and gather evidence," Adan said. "It is a due-process issue."

The Advocates for Human Rights, a Minneapolis-based nonprofit, filed a federal lawsuit on Thursday, March 12, challenging the "increasingly restrictive limitations on pub-

lic access to immigration court proceedings" at the Whipple Federal Building. It names Attorney General Pam Bondi, the Executive Office for Immigration Review – part of the Department of Justice – and the chief immigration judge.

"Federal law is clear: Immigration court hearings are open to the public," Michele Garnett McKenzie, executive director

SEE HEARINGS ON A8 >

Iran vows to keep vital oil strait shut



ARASH KHAMOOSHI • The New York Times

Residents salvage their belongings from an apartment building damaged by a missile strike in Tehran, Iran, on Thursday. Fighting has displaced an estimated 3.2 million people.

Khamenei's first public statement read on TV; global energy disruption called the worst ever.

By JON GAMBRELL,
DAVID RISING, MIKE CORDER
and NATALIE MELZER
The Associated Press

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - Iran's secretive new supreme leader on Thursday vowed to keep up attacks on Gulf Arab countries and use the effective closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz as leverage against the United States and Israel. It was his first public

statement since being chosen to succeed his father, who was killed in an Israeli strike.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, who Israel suspects was wounded in the opening salvo of the war, has not appeared in public since then. In the statement read by a state TV news anchor, he vowed to avenge those killed in the war, including in a strike on a school that killed over 165 people.

'We make a lot of money'
Trump tries to reframe soaring oil prices as a positive. **A8**

The statement signaled a willingness to continue the war that has disrupted global energy supplies, international travel and the relative safety enjoyed by the Gulf Arab states. Iran's unrelenting attacks on shipping traffic and energy infrastructure in the Persian Gulf had earlier pushed oil back

above \$100 a barrel.

In other developments, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli attacks have killed top Iranian nuclear scientists.

Speaking Thursday night at a news conference, Netanyahu denounced Iran's new supreme leader as a "puppet of the Revolutionary Guards" who cannot appear in public. And he addressed the Iranian people, saying the moment for

a "new path of freedom" was approaching and that Israel stands with them.

"But at the end of the day, it depends on you. It is in your hands," he said.

U.S. and Israeli strikes have exacted a heavy toll on Iran's leadership, military and ballistic missile program but have failed to topple the government, which U.S. President Donald Trump has at times

SEE IRAN ON A8 >

Medical costs are squeezing Americans

Survey says one-third have borrowed money or cut other spending.

By REED ABELSON
The New York Times

Americans are feeling the squeeze from rising health care costs, and they are already doing without. One-third of Americans – an estimated 82 million people – say they are making sacrifices, including skipping meals or driving less, to pay for care, according to a new survey released Thursday.

In the survey, 15% of individuals said they had borrowed money in the past year to pay for medical expenses, while another 11% said they had skipped a meal. Those without insurance reported even more trade-offs.

The survey was conducted from June through August 2025 by the West Health-Gallup Center on Healthcare in America, a partnership between Gallup and West Health, a group of nonprofits focused on health care costs.

"It is impacting people every day in their decisions," Tim Lash, president of the West

SEE HEALTH CARE ON A8 >

Walz takes a big swing at fraud in final act

Proposal leaves some legislators frustrated.

By RYAN FAIRCLOTH
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Gov. Tim Walz has flooded state legislators with ambitious proposals to fight fraud in government programs, holding a series of briefings in recent weeks meant to show he's on top of a problem that has largely defined his last act as governor.

But opposition from Republicans, skepticism from some fellow Democrats and a shrinking window of time raise doubts of whether the DFL governor can muster the political momentum to solve a complex crisis that threatens to stain his legacy.

Walz's push comes after the Trump administration put a national spotlight on Minnesota's fraud crisis, tarnishing his political reputation and prompting him to end his bid for re-election. With about 10

SEE FRAUD ON A5 >

HOW CANAL PARK BECAME A TOURISM JUGGERNAUT

By JANA HOLLINGSWORTH • The Minnesota Star Tribune

DULUTH - Grandma's Saloon and Grill has sat on coveted real estate at the foot of the Aerial Lift Bridge in Canal Park for five decades, but it wasn't always prized.

In its first years, customers navigated past piles of scrap metal and empty warehouses on their way to grab a burger in the old-timey space. Views of Lake Superior were blocked by junked cars and trashed appliances.

"It was the wrong side of the tracks, literally and figuratively," said Brian Daugherty, president of Grandma's Restaurant Co.

The company, celebrating 50 years in 2026, was among the few in the 1970s and '80s attempting to capitalize on the lure of the bridge and the waterfront.

Now home to six hotels and inns, more than a dozen restaurants and many shops, it's easily the most visited part of the city, with about 1.5 million people taking in the piers and iconic bridge every year. It plays a starring role

SEE CANAL PARK ON A5 >



Grandma's Restaurant Co.

In the 1970s, Duluth's Canal Park was full of aging warehouses, and scrap metal lined the streets. Today, the transformed waterfront neighborhood is easily the most visited part of the city.

TOP NEWS

Social Security watchdog investigates alleged misuse of data by ex-DOGE employee. **A3**

NATION & WORLD

New drone maker partly owned by Trump's sons hopes to win Pentagon contracts. **A3**

STATE & REGION

Champlin City Council member resigns as he faces criminal tax evasion charges. **A4**

SPORTS

Gophers men's hockey finishes the season with its fewest wins in more than 50 years. **C1**

BUSINESS

Stalled Mpls. hotel project has a new owner after developers failed to secure financing. **D1**

VARIETY

Patti Smith is coming to the Twin Cities this weekend with a message for Minnesota. **E1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?

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