



PAYING THE PRICE

EVEN WITH A TENTATIVE DEAL TO END THE IRAN WAR, IT COULD TAKE AWHILE FOR CONSUMERS TO SEE A PRICE DIFFERENCE AT LOCAL FUEL PUMPS AND SUPERMARKETS. **C1**

EAST RUTHERFORD

Jersey stadium offers all the world a stage



The World Cup returned to New York/New Jersey Stadium (better known as MetLife) on Tuesday for a match between France and Senegal. Kylian Mbappé, below left, scored twice to move past Pelé and Lionel Messi with 14 World Cup goals, and Les Bleus beat Senegal 3-1 in their World Cup opener. Below right, fans react as French players leave the field. Find more coverage in sports. *Photos by Andrew Mills, NJ.com*



STATEHOUSE

N.J.'s 'war on drugs' rules endure, despite push for reforms

A state commission has called for sentencing changes to reduce racial disparities, but Legislature so far is slow to act.

Ted Sherman *NJ.com*

It was shortly after 2:30 in the morning when Miska Diggs was pulled over by New Brunswick police more than a decade ago for a broken taillight.

What began as a minor traffic stop in 2015 turned into a major criminal case after officers found a stash of crack cocaine that she had been dealing, along with the 9mm handgun that she had in the trunk of her white Lexus.

Diggs, who pleaded guilty to drug and weapons charges, was sentenced to 14 years in state prison with a minimum mandatory term of at least seven years before she could be released, even as a non-violent offender.

"They deemed me a menace to society. A career criminal. Unredeemable," said Diggs.

But last month, the one-time elementary school dropout stood crying at the Rutgers-Newark commencement in the Prudential Center alongside more than 1,400 other graduates, as she received her bachelor's degree in social work at the age of 49.

"I was not what they made me out to be," she said.

Every year there are hundreds of convictions in New Jersey for nonviolent drug crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences put in place by the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of 1986, signed into law by then-Gov. Thomas Kean, in a harsh response to the crack epidemic.

In 2023 and 2024 alone, there were nearly 500 convictions in New Jersey just for drug offenses committed within 1,000 feet of school property that carried mandatory minimum sentences, according to New Jersey judiciary records.

Many of the state's top law enforcement officials and social justice advocates are looking to turn the page on such unforgiving enforcement, giving judges more discretion in sentencing nonviolent drug offenders as part of a package of reforms that have been repeatedly recommended by the New Jersey Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission.

The Legislature, however, has so far shown little interest to act.

The commission was created in 2009 to examine racial and ethnic disparities in the state's criminal justice system and conduct a full review of the criminal sentencing provisions of New Jersey law. It includes representatives from **SEE STATEHOUSE, A4**

TRANSPORTATION

At N.J.-hosted matches, the story to watch is the traffic

With 80,000 fans leaving the Meadowlands at rush hour, New Jersey's transit plan for the World Cup faced its biggest test after the France-Senegal game.



Steve Politi *NJ.com*

As assignments go, this was a career first. I have covered sports in New Jersey for nearly three decades, attending nearly every big game in the state in that span. Never before had I been told to attend an event for the sole purpose of leaving it.

More specifically, I was tasked with chronicling my trip home from the World Cup match in the Meadowlands on Tuesday afternoon. I asked my editor if he had any advice before I set off on this journey.

"Bring a diaper," he said. I'll admit, I was prepared for the worst. This was the perfect-storm moment for New

Jersey's first time hosting this quadrennial soccer festival in 32 years. France, a popular world power, was playing upstart Senegal with a 3 p.m. kickoff. That meant the game would end just after 5 p.m. — or at the start of our daily traffic hell.

Transportation had dominated the headlines for the months leading into the World Cup, and that attention only intensified after the first game in East Rutherford. The trains and shuttles seemed to run seamlessly, but hundreds of fans were stuck waiting in the ride share lot Saturday hours after Brazil and Morocco played to a 1-1 tie.

I was among them that night. It took me (gulp) two hours and 45 minutes to complete the 10-mile trip, and it was a comedy of errors. One media shuttle bus never showed up, then another, then our Ubers were canceled, then it took almost a half hour for (the wrong) media shuttle just to get out of the lot.

It was a hot mess. In this job, people always ask me the same question before a major event like the World Cup: Can I carry your notebook? I wish I had answered, "Sure. As long as you carry ME, too."

This time, on Tuesday, FIFA approved

me for a parking pass. But with all the dire warnings about snarled traffic, would that be any better?

The game ended at 5:07 p.m. after the two teams traded goals in an unexpected flurry of action during stoppage time. I looked out to see that thousands of fans had missed Kylian Mbappe's second goal of the match on a brilliant 30-yard laser because, as if this was another Jets preseason game, they left early.

Hey, that's cheating!

SO MANY EMPTY PARKING SPOTS

I made it out of the stadium at 5:15 p.m., and what I saw in Lot M wasn't much different than what I encountered on the way in.

Empty spaces. Lots and lots of empty spaces.

This is why the World Cup is so different from every NFL Sunday or Taylor Swift concert. FIFA has restricted parking for security reasons — or, at least, that's the world soccer body's official explanation — which has made the event a much bigger logistical challenge. **SEE POLITI, A2**

NATION & WORLD

FBI disrupts 'attack'

Law enforcement officials say they disrupted a planned attack targeting the UFC cage-fighting show staged at the White House this past weekend, according to court papers unsealed that say plotters spoke of drone attacks and shooting people in the crowd. **C1**

NATION & WORLD

\$600M ballroom

A detailed project summary prepared for the White House by the contractor hired to build a ballroom estimated the total construction cost at \$600 million, with more than half coming from taxpayers, according to a copy of the estimate obtained by the Washington Post. **C6**