

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

THE WEATHER

Today, sun giving way to clouds, becoming breezy, afternoon showers, high 75. Tonight, periodic rain, low 58. Tomorrow, on-and-off rain, high 67. Weather map is on Page B10.

VOL. CLXXIII . . . . No. 60,154

© 2024 The New York Times Company

TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2024

Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00

## Ads With Girls Elicit Inquiries By Predators

### Posts on Instagram Are Going to Adult Men

By MICHAEL H. KELLER and JENNIFER VALENTINO-DeVRIES

When a children's jewelry maker began advertising on Instagram, she promoted photos of a 5-year-old girl wearing a sparkly charm to users interested in parenting, children, ballet and other topics identified by Meta as appealing mostly to women.

But when the merchant got the automated results of her ad campaign from Instagram, the opposite had happened: The ads had gone almost entirely to adult men.

Perplexed and concerned, the merchant contacted The New York Times, which in recent years has published multiple articles about the abuse of children on social media platforms. In February, The Times investigated Instagram accounts run by parents for their young daughters, and the dark underworld of men who have sexualized interactions with those accounts.

With the photos from the jewelry ads in hand, The Times set out to understand why they attracted an unwanted audience. Test ads run by The Times using the same photos with no text not only replicated the merchant's experience — they drew the attention of convicted sex offenders and other men whose accounts indicated a sexual interest in children or who wrote sexual messages.

The Times opened two Instagram accounts and promoted posts showing the 5-year-old girl, her face turned away from the camera, wearing a tank top and the charm. Separate posts showed the clothing and jewelry without the child model, or with a black box concealing her. All of the paid ads were promoted to people interested in topics like childhood, dance and cheerleading, which Meta's audience tools estimated as predominantly women.

Aside from reaching a surprisingly large proportion of men, the ads got direct responses from dozens of Instagram users, including phone calls from two accused sex

Continued on Page A20



AMIR COHEN/REUTERS

## A Day of Grieving in Israel

Monday was the country's first Memorial Day since the Oct. 7 attacks. Above, a bomb shelter near the Nova festival site. Page A8.

## Secret Files Show Hamas Spying on Its People

By ADAM RASGON and RONEN BERGMAN

JERUSALEM — The Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar has for years overseen a secret police force in Gaza that conducted surveillance on everyday Palestinians and built files on young people, journalists and those who questioned the government, according to intelligence officials and a trove of internal documents reviewed by The New York Times.

The unit, known as the General Security Service, relied on a network of Gaza informants, some of whom reported their own neighbors to the police. People landed in security files for attending protests or publicly criticizing Hamas.

In some cases, the records suggest that the authorities followed people to determine if they were carrying on romantic relationships outside marriage.

## Everyday Gazans Stuck With 'Thuggery by Local Authorities'

Everyday Gazans were stuck — behind the wall of Israel's crippling blockade and under the thumb and constant watch of a security force. That dilemma continues today, with the added threat of Israeli ground troops and airstrikes.

"We're facing bombardment by the local authorities," Ehab Fasfous, a journalist in the Gaza Strip who appeared in the files of the General Security Service, said in a phone interview from Gaza.

The documents show that Hamas leaders, despite claiming to represent the people of Gaza, would not tolerate even a whiff of

dissent. Security officials trailed journalists and people they suspected of immoral behavior. Agents got criticism removed from social media and discussed ways to defame political adversaries. Political protests were viewed as threats to be undermined.

Everyday Gazans were stuck — behind the wall of Israel's crippling blockade and under the thumb and constant watch of a security force. That dilemma continues today, with the added threat of Israeli ground troops and airstrikes.

"We're facing bombardment by the local authorities," Ehab Fasfous, a journalist in the Gaza Strip who appeared in the files of the General Security Service, said in a phone interview from Gaza.

Continued on Page A9

## New Polls Find Trump in Lead In Swing States

By NATE COHN

Donald J. Trump leads President Biden in five crucial battleground states, as a yearning for change and discontent over the economy and the war in Gaza among young, Black and Hispanic voters threaten to unravel the president's Democratic coalition.

The surveys by The New York Times, Siena College and The Philadelphia Inquirer found that Mr. Trump was ahead among registered voters in a head-to-head matchup against Mr. Biden in five of six key states: Michigan, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia and Pennsylvania. Mr. Biden led among registered voters in only one battleground state, Wisconsin.

The race was closer among likely voters. Mr. Trump led in five states as well, but Mr. Biden edged ahead in Michigan while trailing only narrowly in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. While Mr. Biden won all six of those states in 2020, victories in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin would be enough for him to win re-election, provided he won everywhere else he did four years ago.

The results were similar in a hypothetical matchup that included minor-party candidates and the independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who won an average

Continued on Page A18

## COHEN DESCRIBES HUSH-MONEY PLOT IN KEY TESTIMONY

### AN ORDER: 'JUST DO IT'

### Trump's Ex-Fixer Recalls Hiding 'Catastrophic' Daniels Story

This article is by Ben Protess, Jonah E. Bromwich and Maggie Haberman.

Michael D. Cohen, the do-nothing fixer who once boasted of burying Donald J. Trump's secrets and spreading his lies, took the stand at the former president's criminal trial in Manhattan on Monday and exposed those machinations to the jury and the world.

Narrating the prosecution's case in tell-all detail, Mr. Cohen testified that Mr. Trump in 2016 had personally directed him to pay off a porn star and had approved a dubious reimbursement plan.

"Just do it," the former fixer recalled Mr. Trump saying about the hush-money payment to the porn star, Stormy Daniels.

After Mr. Trump won the White House, Mr. Cohen demanded his money back, he said, and met with Mr. Trump, who approved monthly reimbursements. Then the president-elect changed the subject to his new job, saying, "This is going to be one heck of a ride in D.C."

Over nearly five hours of testimony, Mr. Cohen painted a damning portrait of his relationship with Mr. Trump, decoded their shady vernacular and spotlighted the conduct at the center of the first criminal trial of an American president: the silencing of women who had stories of sex with Mr. Trump to tell and to sell.

Mr. Cohen's star turn was the climax of the prosecutors' case as they formally introduced the jury to a witness who has loomed over the trial and could trigger the former president's downfall. He brought the case's architecture into focus, offering firsthand corroboration of what jurors have heard from other witnesses. He also wove a sprawling cast of

Continued on Page A16

## A Night to Remember at the Opera, Complete With a Phantom

By ELISABETTA POVOLEDO

ROME — In the pitch-dark auditorium of Rome's Teatro Costanzi, a high-pitched lament floated from the top galleries. Dozens of flashlights snapped on, their beams crisscrossing crazily, seeking the source of the sound.

The shafts of light homed in on a spectral figure — a slim, dark-haired woman dressed in white, moving at a funereal pace and plaintively singing. In the audience, 130-odd children, ages 8 to 10, let loose squeals, some gasps, and one "it's not real." Several called out "Emma, Emma."

The children had just been told that the Costanzi, the capital's opera house, had a resident phantom. No, not that one. This was said to be the spirit of Emma Carelli, an Italian soprano who managed the theater a century ago, and loved it so much that she was loath to leave it, even in death.

"The theater is a place where strange things happen, where what is impossible becomes possible," Francesco Giambone, the Costanzi's general manager, told the children Saturday afternoon when they arrived to participate in a get-to-know-the-theater-sleepover.

Music education ranks as a low priority in Italy, the country that invented opera and gave the world some of its greatest composers. Many experts, including Mr. Giambone, say their country



ALESSANDRO PENSO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Valentina Gargano performed as the ghost of Emma Carelli at an opera house sleepover in Rome.

has rested on its considerable laurels rather than cultivate a musical culture that encourages students to learn about their illustrious heritage.

With little backing from schools or lawmakers, arts organizations like the Costanzi have concluded that it is up to them to reach out to the young.

Mr. Giambone sought to dispel

opera's stuffy image by abandoning the genre's strict dress code. That change, like the sleepover, is part of his effort to make opera, often seen as an elitist, highbrow and abstruse art form for the initiated, more familiar and accessible, especially to children.

"We believe that the theater should be for everyone, and that it should make people feel at home,"

Mr. Giambone said in an interview. Hence the decision to welcome youngsters to eat, sleep and play there. "Once a theater is a home, it is no longer something distant, something a bit austere to fear, or somewhere you feel inadequate," he said.

"There's a lot of talk about Made in Italy, but real shortsight-

Continued on Page A6

## Unpaid Debts and Legal Woes Dog a Governor's Bid for Senate

By CAMPBELL ROBERTSON and MAUREEN FARRELL

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Jim Justice, the businessman-turned-politician governor of West Virginia, has been pursued in court for years by banks, governments, business partners and former employees for millions of dollars in unmet obligations.

And for a long time, Mr. Justice and his family's companies have managed to stave off one threat after another with wily legal tactics notably at odds with the aw-shucks persona that has endeared him to so many West Virginians.

On Tuesday, he is heavily favored to win the Republican Sen-

ate primary and cruise to victory in the general election, especially after the departure of the Democratic incumbent, Joe Manchin III.

But now, as he wraps up his second term as governor and campaigns for a seat in the U.S. Senate, things are looking dicier. Much like Donald J. Trump, with whom he is often compared — with whom he often compares himself — Mr. Justice has faced a barrage of costly judgments and legal setbacks.

And this time, there may be too

Continued on Page A14



TODD HEISLER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Donald J. Trump shook his head at much of the testimony.



INTERNATIONAL A4-10

### Critical Moment for Ukraine

Civilians fled to Kharkiv, above, from Vovchansk, where thinning forces were facing a Russian advance. PAGE A4

### China to Free Covid Reporter

Zhang Zhan, a self-described citizen journalist, was jailed after posting videos from Wuhan in 2020. PAGE A6

NATIONAL A11-20

### Cracks in a Blue-Collar Image

Representative Henry Cuellar of Texas has humble origins, but now faces corruption charges. PAGE A15

SPORTS B6-10

### A New Era for the W.N.B.A.

A league that has gained momentum from newcomers like Caitlin Clark begins play on Tuesday. PAGES B6-7

OBITUARIES A21, 24

### Poet, Famous First as Protester

David Shapiro, a dreamlike poet and a symbol of 1968 unrest, was 77. PAGE A24



ARTS C1-6

### What Audubon Missed

In a new book, Kenn Kaufman looks at the miscues and contributions of early American ornithologists. PAGE C5

### Another Hellish Adventure

Supergiant Games had a hit with a game with players trapped in the underworld. Now it has created a sequel. PAGE C1

BUSINESS B1-5

### Making Grids Greener

Wind and solar energy could receive a lift after federal regulators approved the biggest changes in more than a decade to the way U.S. power lines are planned and funded. PAGE B1

### Those Hurting the Most

High interest rates haven't crashed the economy, but they are taking a toll on millions of low- and moderate-income families, many of whom are falling behind on credit card bills. PAGE B1

OPINION A22-23

### Zeynep Tufekci

PAGE A23



SCIENCE TIMES D1-8

### Hope in New Treatment

Kendric Cromer, 12, above, who is from the Washington area, is the first person to start the monthslong gene therapy for sickle-cell disease. PAGE D1



0 354613 9