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What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Sony Pictures and Apollo** submitted a \$26 billion all-cash offer for Paramount Global, the latest twist in one of the messiest deal dramas in recent memory. **A1**
- ◆ **Apple's revenue** declined for the fifth time in the past six quarters, dragged down by ailing iPhone sales and new competition from smartphone rivals in China. **A1**
- ◆ **The FTC said** former Pioneer CEO Scott Sheffield attempted to collude with OPEC officials to raise oil prices and referred the allegation to the Justice Department for a potential criminal probe. **B1**
- ◆ **Tech shares led** U.S. stock indexes higher ahead of a jobs report for April, with the S&P 500 and Dow both rising 0.9% and the Nasdaq gaining 1.5%. **B11**
- ◆ **The SEC ended a probe** into large bets that three prominent investors made on Activision days before the company agreed to be acquired by Microsoft in 2022. **B1**
- ◆ **TikTok and Universal Music** struck a new licensing deal that will return the record label's artists and their songs to the video-sharing app, ending months of disagreements over pay. **B2**
- ◆ **Standard Chartered** posted a rise in first-quarter net profit due to higher trading income, despite lower earnings from the bank's lending business. **B11**
- ◆ **A Justice Department** probe into TD Bank's internal controls focuses on how Chinese crime groups and drug traffickers used the Canadian lender to launder money from U.S. fentanyl sales. **B3**

World-Wide

- ◆ **Parents of students** attending universities roiled by pro-Palestinian protests are frustrated with the colleges' response and have shown themselves ready to push back financially. **A1, A6**
- ◆ **Trump's onetime** fixer Michael Cohen grew despondent when he learned he wouldn't be getting a White House job, a former lawyer for porn star Stormy Daniels said at Trump's hush-money trial. **A4**
- ◆ **The political** calculations of Israel's prime minister and Hamas's top leader in Gaza, both hard-liners, have left them little room to reach a compromise over the war between the two sides, posing a problem for the Biden administration. **A7**
- ◆ **The OECD said** the global economy could suffer a significant setback if an escalation of conflict in the Middle East were to push oil prices sharply higher. **A7**
- ◆ **Estonia's border city** of Narva, singled out by Putin as historically Russian land, is among potential Baltic targets for destabilization by Moscow should the Russian leader further test the West's political and military resolve. **A8**
- ◆ **Chubb is preparing** to make a \$350 million insurance payout to Maryland in connection with the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge before the rebuilding of the span begins. **A3**
- ◆ **A Georgia business** owner who bragged that he "fed" a police officer to rioters at the Capitol was sentenced to nearly five years in prison in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, attack. **A2**

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Sony, Apollo Bid for Paramount

Offer of \$26 billion in cash comes as window for Skydance deal is set to close

By JESSICA TOONKEL AND MIRIAM GOTTFRIED

Sony Pictures and private-equity firm Apollo Global Management have submitted an all-cash \$26 billion offer for Paramount Global, the latest

twist in one of the messiest deal dramas in recent memory. Apollo and Sony on Wednesday submitted the offer letter, which was signed by Sony Pictures Chief Executive Tony Vinciguerra and Aaron Sobel, a partner at Apollo, according to people familiar with the situation. The offer is a starting point for discussions and is nonbinding.

The joint bid comes as Paramount had been in exclusive merger talks with Skydance

Media, a production company led by David Ellison. A number of shareholders have protested the Skydance offer, which they said gave controlling shareholder Shari Redstone a sweetheart deal for her stake in National Amusements, the company through which she controls Paramount.

The company has since parted ways with CEO Bob Bakish, and four of its directors left. Bakish and at least one of the directors voiced concerns

over the Skydance deal.

Both Skydance and Paramount entered into exclusive negotiations over a deal last month, but that exclusivity period runs out at the end of Friday—meaning Paramount and Redstone can open up sales discussion with other possible suitors.

Under the terms of Sony and Apollo's offer, Sony would become the significant majority shareholder, with Apollo

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Apple's Sales Fall On Slow Demand in Key Areas

Share buybacks of \$110 billion unveiled, a return to revenue growth is forecast

By AARON TILLEY

Apple's revenue declined for the fifth time in the past six quarters, dragged down by ailing iPhone sales and new competition from smartphone rivals in China.

Still, shares of Apple rose more than 7% in after-market trading as the company authorized \$110 billion in stock buybacks and signaled that the current quarter is likely to see revenue growth. Also, while sales and profits fell in the March quarter, the numbers were slightly better than analyst expectations.

Apple is struggling on a number of fronts. The company's single most important business—the iPhone—has faced sluggish growth. In recent years, Apple has seen success by steering consumers toward its more expensive "Pro"-designated phones. Its latest iPhone 15 Pro Max was its most expensive ever with a starting price of \$1,200. But this premium strategy isn't propping up overall revenue as much as it did in the past.

For the first three months of the year, Samsung reclaimed the No. 1 spot for worldwide smartphone market share, according to research firm IDC.

Apple iPhone unit shipments slipped nearly 10% for the quarter over the previous year, while the total smartphone market expanded about 8% annually. Apple had briefly become the No. 1 smartphone vendor near the end of 2023.

In the most recent quarter, iPhones sales declined 10.5% from the prior year to \$46 billion. That was in line with analyst projections.

Some investors said they

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◆ **Tech stocks lead rally before jobs data..... B11**

Police Move In to Dismantle UCLA Protest Camp



FACEOFF: Police confronted pro-Palestinian demonstrators on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles early Thursday to clear the protesters' encampment. Cleanup crews later removed tents, wood and other debris. **A6**

Colleges' New Headaches: Irate Parents

Colleges already have a student revolt on their hands. Now their parents are rebelling, too.

By Clare Ansberry, Oyin Adedoyin and Katherine Hamilton

Parents paying as much as \$90,000 for their kids to attend elite schools are angry and frustrated with colleges' responses to the Gaza pro-

tests—on both sides of the political divide. Whether their kids are protesting, counter-protesting or trying to stay out of it, parents are demanding that schools do more to keep their kids safe and learning.

"They are not getting the education they expected and paid for," said Zev Gewurz, a Boston real-estate attorney whose daughter is a senior at Barnard College in New York City.

Parents are preparing to push back financially. They are requesting tuition refunds where classes have been canceled and even contacting college counselors to ask how to get their money back. Parents are also threatening not to donate in the future.

College officials said they are trying to keep students safe, adding security measures while also trying to respect students' rights to demon-

strate. But tensions have exploded in the past few days.

The tensions are further fraying the relationship between colleges and parents. They add to a drumbeat from more families questioning the value—and hefty pricetag—of a college education. The reevaluation is especially significant for current college seniors, whose end of high school and four years in col-

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Inside RFK Jr.'s Unorthodox Campaign

By REBECCA BALLHAUS AND ELIZA COLLINS

As the presidential election was heating up in February, Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s campaign made an announcement to staff: Charles Eisenstein, the director of messaging, would spend weeks in Costa Rica, "reconnecting with spirit." While there, he recorded a podcast interview in which he said some of his boss's ideas were "actually repugnant" but that Kennedy was still the best candidate.

In recognition of his sojourn in the Central American country, Eisenstein took a pay cut for working less: rather than earning \$21,000 a month, he started billing the campaign \$14,000.

The episode highlights the unusual nature of the Kennedy operation, which even by the standards of freewheeling political campaigns stands out for its eclectic mix of characters, poor financial planning and what some staffers describe as a dysfunctional, unprofessional atmosphere.

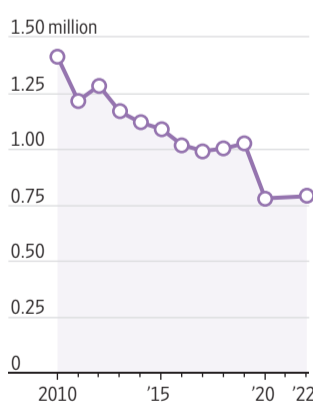
Kennedy, 70 years old, has surrounded himself with aides and advisers who have little political experience and, in some instances, histories that might have raised eyebrows on other campaigns. Former staffers complained that some top

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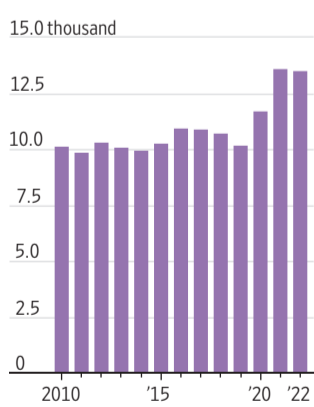
Drunk-Driving Deaths Rise

About 13,500 people died in alcohol impairment-related crashes in 2022, 33% above 2019's toll. At the same time, arrests for driving under the influence have plummeted. **A3**

Arrests for driving under the influence*



Alcohol-related driving fatalities†



*Data unavailable for 2021. †Fatalities in crashes where the highest driver BAC is .08 or higher. Sources: FBI (arrests); National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (fatalities)

Ordinary Guy Takes a \$3,000 Case to the Supreme Court

'I'm just wondering why the government's making us do this,' says one justice

By BEN FOLDY

In the coming weeks, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to issue eagerly awaited decisions on abortion, firearms and the extent of Donald Trump's executive privilege. Another decision will also be eagerly anticipated by Stuart Harrow.

The Department of Defense employee is waiting to find out whether a missed email

spells an end to his 11-year quest to get \$3,000 of pay (and interest) he says was wrongly withheld during 2013 budget cuts that briefly forced him out of work.

His case would feel right at home in small-claims court. But in March, the nine justices of the highest court in the land heard oral arguments about whether the government should let him continue his

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Europe Takes Radical Steps To Boost Production

State spending to help manufacturers compete with China and the U.S. is up

By TOM FAIRLESS AND KIM MACKRAEL

FLAMANVILLE, France—Early this year, a top European Union official made an eye-catching proposal: A €100 billion public fund that would curb Europe's reliance on U.S. defense manufacturers, who make nearly two-thirds of Europe's military hardware.

The cash could subsidize European companies to develop and manufacture more

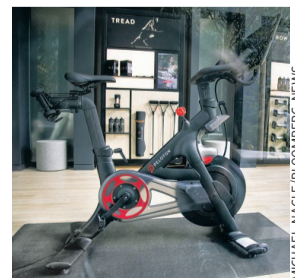
weapons at home at a time when the continent faces a growing threat from Russia.

Many officials were skeptical. For decades, the EU had been fighting European governments to limit state support for domestic companies. Now, one of its leaders was calling for taxpayers' money to finance them.

The idea of such large-scale funding for the defense industry is still under discussion.

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INSIDE



BUSINESS & FINANCE
Peloton CEO steps down, workforce cut by 15% as demand continues to lag. **B1**



MANSION
A supply crunch is affecting high-end markets across the country. **M1**



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