

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Exxon Mobil held** secret talks with Russia's biggest state energy company about a return to Russia should the U.S. and Moscow approve it as part of a Ukraine peace process. **A1**
- ◆ **Trump told advisers** that he wants to move quickly to announce a nominee to replace Lisa Cook on the Fed's board of governors. **A2**
- ◆ **AT&T agreed to buy** certain wireless spectrum licenses for about \$23 billion in cash from EchoStar after federal regulators exerted pressure on the satellite-and-wireless company. **B1**
- ◆ **Major U.S. stock indexes** rose, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq both gaining 0.4% and the Dow advancing 0.3%. **B11**
- ◆ **Eli Lilly said** a third late-stage study of its experimental anti-obesity pill hit its key goals, paving the way for the drugmaker to begin regulatory submissions. **B3**
- ◆ **Cracker Barrel reversed** itself, saying it would revert to its "Old Timer" logo a day after insisting that it would keep a streamlined new look its critics had objected to. **B1**
- ◆ **Norway's** sovereign-wealth fund sold shares of Caterpillar and ditched its stakes in four Israeli banks to express its displeasure with Israel's conduct in Gaza. **B3**
- ◆ **Microsoft is weighing** disciplinary measures for employees who occupied President Brad Smith's office to protest the company's relationship with Israel. **B2**
- ◆ **SpaceX pulled off** a smoother test launch of its Starship rocket, managing a more complete mission after setbacks earlier this year. **B2**

World-Wide

- ◆ **Egypt began training** Palestinians to be part of a force of up to 10,000 that would provide security for the Gaza Strip, as Arab countries envision a postwar Gaza without Hamas. **A16**
- ◆ **Israeli troops fired on** a Gaza hospital because they saw a camera they believed Hamas was using to monitor troop movements, the military said. **A16**
- ◆ **A whistleblower said** DOGE members uploaded a Social Security database to a cloud server, putting at risk the security of more than 300 million Americans' personal information. **A4**
- ◆ **A heated debate at** the DNC exposed a growing rift over U.S. policy toward Israel that threatens to exacerbate Democrats' division ahead of the midterm elections. **A4**
- ◆ **France's prime minister** scheduled a confidence vote for next month that likely will lead to the collapse of his centrist government. **A7**
- ◆ **A judge threw out** the Trump administration's lawsuit against Maryland's entire federal bench, criticizing it as "potentially calamitous." **A6**
- ◆ **U.N. atomic agency** chief Rafael Grossi has been receiving round-the-clock protection for weeks following a specific Iranian threat. **A16**
- ◆ **Australia said Iran** directed two antisemitic attacks against the local Jewish community and that it would expel the country's ambassador. **A16**
- ◆ **Artificial intelligence** is profoundly limiting some young Americans' employment prospects, a research paper indicates. **A3**

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Exxon, Russia in Secret Talks

After huddling with President Trump in Alaska, President Vladimir Putin told reporters that Russia and the

*By Joe Wallace,
Costas Paris, Alex
Leary and Collin Eaton*

U.S. could do more business together—for example, between their Pacific coastlines. “We look forward to dealing,” Trump replied. What the two leaders didn’t

say: Behind closed doors, their countries’ biggest energy companies had already sketched out a map to going back into business, pumping oil and gas off Russia’s far-east coast.

In secret talks with Russia’s biggest state energy company this year, a senior Exxon Mobil executive discussed returning to the massive Sakhalin project if the two governments gave the green light as part of a Ukraine peace process, people familiar with the

discussions said.

Such is the sensitivity that only a handful of people at Exxon knew of the talks. A top executive, Senior Vice President Neil Chapman, led the talks on the Exxon side.

Under the Biden and Trump administrations, Exxon and other companies have had U.S. permission and licenses from the Treasury Department to hold talks about stranded assets with Russian counterparts, one of the people famil-

iar with the discussions said. The first round took place shortly after Exxon’s exit from Russia in 2022.

In parallel, Exxon executives have asked the U.S. government for support if the company goes back to Russia and received a sympathetic hearing, a senior administration official said. CEO Darren Woods discussed Exxon’s possible return with Trump at the White House in recent weeks.

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President Escalates His Bid To Control The Fed

Attempt to fire Cook threatens central bank’s independence to set interest rates

By MATT GROSSMAN
AND GREG IP

President Trump’s attempt to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook is the most dramatic step yet in his effort to take control of the independent central bank and its vast authority over interest rates.

Trump has for months demanded the Federal Reserve lower rates to boost the economy, make housing more affordable, and lower the cost of servicing the national debt. He has castigated Fed Chair Jerome Powell for not moving sooner to cut them. By replacing Cook, he could add enough voices to the seven-member board of governors to potentially outvote Powell and move interest rates in his preferred direction.

“To the extent that Fed independence stands for anything, it stands for the idea that monetary policy should not be made by the whims of the sitting president,” said Peter Conti-Brown, a financial and legal scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. “If we allow this to become the norm, then this is the end of Federal Reserve independence as we know it.”

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◆ **Trump weighs a Fed replacement..... A2**

‘Day of Disruption’ Grips Israel in Call for War’s End



OHAD ZWENBERG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

AFLLAME: Demonstrators on Tuesday torched tires and blocked highways such as the one above near Lod, Israel, in protests demanding a cease-fire and the release of hostages, as Palestinians in Gaza braced for an expanded offensive.

RFK Jr.’s MAHA Agenda Is Shaking Big Food Makers

Kellogg buyer weighs attack on dyes and processed food

By JESSE NEWMAN AND OWEN TUCKER-SMITH

BATTLE CREEK, Mich.—Executives from Italian food giant Ferrero hoppedscotched around the U.S. in late June, touring cereal factories at the center of one of the most unusual public-health controversies in years.

President Trump’s top health official, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., had said the artificial dyes in WK Kellogg’s Froot Loops, a fixture in grocery store cereal aisles since 1963, were poisoning America’s children.

Ferrero had offered to buy the 119-year-old cereal business, which was struggling. But acquiring Kellogg meant stepping into a political mess. Kennedy had vowed to crack down on processed food, and was blasting big food companies for using the dyes and other additives.

After weighing Kellogg’s financial and political problems, Ferrero cut its offer by

about \$75 million, according to a recent securities filing, agreeing to buy the company in a deal that valued it at about \$3.1 billion.

The Trump administration’s “Make America Healthy Again” agenda has shaken big food companies already reeling from shifting consumer preferences. States across the country have taken up the MAHA cause, passing laws to restrict the sale of certain foods and, in some cases, investigating food companies’ health claims.

Executives at big processed-food makers are trying to determine how much of what Kennedy and MAHA want will actually happen, and how it could affect their bottom lines. Their challenge is to balance his push for what he sees as healthier food with their need to make products that consumers will buy.

Some companies have assembled special

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Aggressive Move Tests Trump Power

By JESS BRAVIN

WASHINGTON—President Trump is pushing his drive for unilateral control of the U.S. government to new levels as he seeks to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook, potentially crossing a red line the Supreme Court has suggested protects the central bank from direct political manipulation.

Since taking office, Trump repeatedly has taken aim at federal laws protecting a range of government officials from arbitrary dismissal, firing without cause Democratic appointees serving fixed terms to supervise agencies that oversee consumer safety, labor organizing, fair-trade practices and the integrity of the civil service, among others.

In a Monday letter published on social media, Trump

told Cook that unproven allegations of mortgage fraud were sufficient cause for dismissal.

Cook, a Biden appointee, has vowed to fight Trump’s action. “President Trump purported to fire me ‘for cause’ when no cause exists under the law, and he has no authority to do so,” she said in a Tuesday statement. “I will not resign. I will continue to carry out my duties to help the American economy as I have been doing since 2022,” she said.

Her attorney, Abbe Lowell, said he would file suit, setting up a case likely to reach the Supreme Court.

In a statement Tuesday, the Federal Reserve said that the governors’ lengthy terms and tenure protection “serve as a vital safeguard, ensuring that monetary policy decisions are

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The Buzzcut Dividing Tennis Fans at the U.S. Open

Carlos Alcaraz’s shaved head added fireworks to an already fiery tournament

By SAM SCHUBE

This year’s U.S. Open, just days old, has had no shortage of drama. Venus Williams made a stirring, if short, return from a year-plus break to the tournament she won twice. Russian star Daniil Medvedev led a raucous crowd through a minuteslong chorus of boos directed at the umpire.

And then something *really* crazy happened: Carlos Alcaraz got a haircut.

A really short one, specifically. The 22-year-old phenom shocked fans on Monday when he revealed that he’d traded his Kennedy-esque swoop of thick black hair for a scalp-revealing buzz.

The reviews were instantane-

ous. “Why this?” asked golfer Rory McIlroy during a pre-match chat with Alcaraz, rubbing the superstar’s newly fuzzy head. “I like it,” McIlroy added. “It’s a good look.”

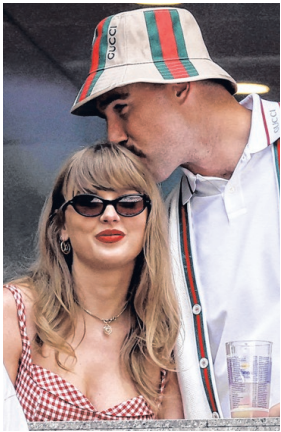
Fellow star Frances Tiafoe was less diplomatic. “It’s horrible. I mean, it’s definitely terrible. That’s my guy, though,” he said during his own press conference Monday, before conceding that the aerodynamic look might make Alcaraz, among the fastest players in the game, even quicker.

“I know he’s lying,” Alcaraz said in response. “I know he likes the haircut.”

Zoe O’Brien, a tennis fan in Brooklyn, tuned into the match Monday night and was

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INSIDE



MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

PERSONAL JOURNAL
Taylor Swift: ‘Your English teacher and your gym teacher are getting married.’ **A9**

BUSINESS & FINANCE
America is on the cusp of a new steel age. Now, it needs customers. **B1**

Netflix ‘KPop’ Film Is Unlikely Smash

By BEN FRITZ
AND ELIAS LEIGHT

Netflix has released hundreds of straight-to-streaming movies over the past decade, but none have captured the pop culture zeitgeist the way big-screen blockbusters like “Barbie” and “Wicked” have. Until “KPop Demon Hunters.”

The animated movie about a Korean girls band battling invaders from the underworld is now the most watched Netflix original film of all time, with 236 million views in 10 weeks. Nobody with children is surprised. Families have been watching “KPop Demon Hunters” on repeat since its June 20 release and anyone who has heard the soundtrack has found themselves uncontrollably humming its songs like poppy anthem “Golden.” A singalong version was

Netflix’s first-ever No. 1 movie at the box office last weekend. Social media is full of fans dancing and parents confessing they have been sucked in. Retailers are scrambling to get “KPop Demon Hunters” merchandise on their shelves after most passed on the opportunity two years ago. It has become a phenomenon on the scale of Disney’s “Frozen.”

Now Netflix and Sony Group’s Sony Pictures Entertainment, which produced “KPop,” are in talks for a sequel, as well as content to keep fans engaged during the years it will take to make another movie, executives at both companies said. Netflix’s film chief is even considering a live-action version further in the future.

At a time when long-running series like Fast & Furious

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