

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2025



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

Kids played at Temple Beth Shalom children's center in Needham. Scholarships help lower some of the costs.

PAYING A HIGH PRICE TO RAISE KIDS HERE

Financial struggles for so many Mass. families are only getting worse

By Yogev Toby
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Gelene Laurant counted every penny as she raised three children and tried to keep up with rising prices of food, clothes, diapers, and child care.

When she had a fourth child, a girl, seven months ago, Laurant, 36, knew she had reached her limit.

The Medford mother weighed the costs of putting another child into day care against her salary as a state worker, then quit her job to stay at home with her kids. The household budget became tighter than ever, demanding tough, sometimes impossible decisions daily.

"Do I pay my rent and let the light cut off, or do I not pay rent and then pay electricity? You have to choose something," she said. "Who wants to live like that?"

Massachusetts has long been one of the most expensive places in the nation to start a family. And now it's only become harder for Laurant and many other parents across the state as tariffs and other factors raise prices on the goods and services that are part of raising children.

The average price of strollers, for example, jumped 18 percent in July alone, to \$617 from \$523, according to a recent survey by Babycenter, a parenting media company. Infant car seat prices rose 12 percent

to \$309 from \$275.

Even before tariffs took effect, diaper prices had climbed nearly 50 percent since the pandemic to more than \$1,000 per year. Baby food and formula prices increased at an average inflation rate of about 3 percent per year since 1997, or a 125 percent increase in 2025, and can reach over \$3,500 annually.

"Families who were already struggling financially are struggling more," said Sarah Muncey, co-president of Neighborhood Villages, a child-care and early childhood education advocacy nonprofit. "Families who are just getting by comfortably and proudly

CHILDREN, Page A6

Concerns on nuclear tests overshadow trade progress

By Katie Rogers and Erica L. Green
NEW YORK TIMES

Before the high-stakes meeting between President Trump and Xi Jinping of China on Thursday, world leaders were hoping for news of an economic truce that could help stabilize the global economy. They got it.

They got something extra, as well — intensified concerns about whether the world is entering a new era of nuclear weapons prolif-

eration among global powers.

After a 90-minute face to face meeting in South Korea, Trump announced that the two leaders had sharply deescalated their trade standoff, agreeing, in essence, on a yearlong cease-fire that would roll back tit-for-tat measures including steep tariffs and shutting off access to rare earth metals.

The meeting was the most anticipated and consequential event of Trump's nearly weeklong tour through Asia, where he engaged in

a series of trade and security agreements with other countries in the region, many of them geared toward containing Beijing.

"I guess on the scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being the best, I would say the meeting was a 12," Trump said aboard Air Force One as he returned to Washington.

The agreement was a win for the world economy, but was brokered under the shadow of a new and sudden amplification of nuclear threats between global powers.

Just minutes before he landed in Busan, South Korea, to meet with Xi, Trump announced on social media that the United States would immediately restart nuclear weapons testing after a lull of more than 30 years. The announcement came after Russia announced that it had also conducted tests of a nuclear-capable missile and sea drone this week.

"Because of other countries testing programs, I have instructed the

CHINA, Page A5

Proposal could be a blow to vision of cleaner Charles

Sewage releases would still be allowed

By Sabrina Shankman
GLOBE STAFF

For decades, Boston residents have been promised a transformed Charles River, one that sheds the history of toxic contamination and is so clean and clear that people can safely swim in it.

There's been steady progress over the years, thanks to efforts to stem the periodic release of street runoff and sewage overflows into the river, which can make people sick, endanger wildlife, and is just plain gross.

But state officials overseeing water and sewer services for much of Massachusetts are proposing an about-face on that longstanding promise. Rather than eliminating altogether the sources of those sewage overflows that pollute the river, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority is considering a proposal that

would still allow some releases into the river merely by changing the water quality classification of the Charles.

"It's hard to even put in words how shocked, dismayed, and betrayed we feel," said Emily Norton, executive director of the Charles River Watershed Association, a nonprofit that aims to protect the watershed through science, advocacy, and the law.

The trouble stems from an archaic system that sends both storm water and untreated sewage through the same pipe to a waste water treatment plant.

Most days, that works just fine. But during and after a moderate or heavy rain, the pipes can get overwhelmed. So to avoid having sewage back up into people's homes, the combined sewage and storm water is piped to outfalls such

CHARLES, Page A6

FIGHTING THE DRAFT



LEO CORREA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hundreds of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Israelis converged in Jerusalem on Thursday to rally against efforts to enlist some of them in the military. The government has tried to find a compromise to end the practice of granting exemptions to most ultra-Orthodox seminary students. Military service is compulsory in Israel for most Jewish 18-year-olds. **A3.**

US judge skeptical on holding back SNAP

Criticizes Trump team's contention it has no option when food benefits run out

By Sean Cotter, John R. Ellement, and Samantha J. Gross
GLOBE STAFF

A federal judge in Boston sharply criticized on Thursday the Trump administration's contention it was powerless to prevent the loss of food assistance that is set to run out on Saturday for 42 million people because of the government shutdown.

In a hearing on a lawsuit brought by more than two dozen states to force the administration to cover Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for November, US District Court Judge Indira Talwani questioned the government's argument that it could not tap into a fund set aside for such emergencies to soften the blow.

"Right now, Congress has put funding in an emergency fund for an emergency, and it's hard for me to understand how this isn't an emergency," Talwani told lawyers during a hearing.

Talwani indicated she was likely to issue a ruling on the lawsuit. **SNAP, Page A7**

SHUTDOWN DAY 31

10
Failed Senate votes

Sept. 19
Date of last session

594,048
Workers furloughed

35 days
Longest-ever shutdown

Social Security workers fight against the tide

By Katie Johnston
GLOBE STAFF

HANOVER — Even before employees started working without pay, morale wasn't great at the Social Security office in this South Shore town.

Their numbers have dropped by half in recent years, leaving just 13 workers to help a rising number of older or disabled people process claims for financial assistance. And since President Trump took office in January intent on slashing the federal workforce — complete with Elon Musk wielding a chain saw — these staffers have endured new levels of turmoil. They received government emails encouraging them to resign and find "higher productivity jobs in the private sector." They learned that the Social Security Administration planned to cut 7,000 workers from the 57,000-member workforce.

And now the government shutdown, which began Oct. 1, has stripped them of the most essential part of a job: a paycheck.

SOCIAL SECURITY, Page A7

The Pentagon has ordered thousands of specialized National Guard personnel to complete civil unrest training over the next few months. **A2.**

The cost of gas for heating won't be as high as expected this winter for about 300,000 Eversource customers. **B5.**

Senator Ed Markey demanded the White House prove it handled asbestos properly in the East Wing demolition. **A5.**

The shining

Friday: Sun's back, windy. High 58-63. Low 45-50.

Saturday: More of the same. High 55-60. Low 38-43.

Sunrise: 7:16 Sunset: 5:38

Weather and Comics, G6-7.

VOL. 308, NO. 123

Suggested retail price
\$4.00

