

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, cloudy, periodic rain, heavy at times, high 64. **Tonight**, partly cloudy, a passing shower, low 51. **Tomorrow**, cloudy, a couple of showers, high 65. Weather map, Page B12.

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THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

Prices in Canada may be higher \$4.00

Trump's Clout Gives Big Win To Big Tobacco

Donors Eclipse Leader of F.D.A. on Vapes

By CHRISTINA JEWETT and KENNETH P. VOGEL

WASHINGTON — Over lunch at his golf club in Jupiter, Fla., on the first Saturday of May, President Trump got an earful from a group of tobacco executives and lobbyists unhappy with the way the Food and Drug Administration was regulating their industry. Eventually Mr. Trump had heard enough. He interrupted the conversation to call Dr. Marty Makary, the F.D.A. commissioner. No answer.

Furious, the president then dialed Dr. Makary's boss, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and another top health official, Dr. Mehmet Oz, the head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. He complained to them about the F.D.A.'s regulation of e-cigarettes, according to three people briefed on the meeting who were not authorized to discuss it. The message was received. Less than one week later, the executives got what they wanted.

On Friday, the F.D.A. issued new guidance that could pave the way for major tobacco companies to begin selling flavored vapes and to snare a chunk of the \$6 billion e-cigarette market away from illegal Chinese competitors. The new policy bypassed the F.D.A.'s regular rule-making process.

In the intervening week, Dr. Makary continued to argue against approving flavored vapes as support from Mr. Kennedy and others collapsed around him. Health and Human Services Department staff began to draft the new plan, according to two people familiar with the events.

On Tuesday, Dr. Makary resigned, telling associates he could not in good conscience remain the head of an agency that backed such a policy. Mr. Kennedy's chief
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Clerk's Conduct Leads to Retrial For Murdaugh

By NICHOLAS BOGEL-BURROUGHS

South Carolina's top court on Wednesday undid the murder convictions against Alex Murdaugh, the lawyer a jury had found guilty of murdering his wife and one of his sons in a trial that captivated the country.

In a unanimous opinion, the State Supreme Court said that "shocking jury interference" by a court clerk who oversaw jurors during the 2023 trial meant that Mr. Murdaugh's convictions and life sentence must be overturned.

Mr. Murdaugh, 57, will remain in prison because he is also serving decades-long prison sentences after pleading guilty to stealing millions of dollars from his law firm and his former clients. While he has admitted to embezzlement, he has long maintained — including during testimony at his trial — that he did not kill his wife, Maggie, 52, and their younger son, Paul, 22.

The South Carolina attorney general's office, which prosecuted the case, will retry Mr. Murdaugh for the killings.

Wednesday's surprise reversal of Mr. Murdaugh's murder convictions followed nearly five years of whirlwind drama that began in one of South Carolina's least populous counties and grew to capture global attention. In the end, the trial — one of the highest profile in the state — was upended by a small-town clerk who could not resist injecting herself into the spectacle.
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KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES



KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

Rolling out a carpet, top, in preparation for President Trump's arrival in Beijing on Wednesday for a two-day summit meeting with Xi Jinping, China's leader. Middle, an honor guard greeted Mr. Trump as he left Air Force One. Above, crowds gathered in Beijing to glimpse the president's motorcade.

JASON COLLINS, 1978-2026

First Active N.B.A. Player to Come Out as Gay



KATHY KMONICEK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jason Collins with the Brooklyn Nets in 2014, a year after he came out in Sports Illustrated.

By SOPAN DEB

Jason Collins, a 7-foot center and N.B.A. journeyman who in 2013 became the first openly gay player in any of the four traditional major American men's sports leagues, has died. He was 47.

Adam Silver, the N.B.A. commissioner, announced the death in a statement on Tuesday. Collins's family said the cause was glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. In December, he disclosed his diagnosis and said he was undergoing treatments.

Collins entered the N.B.A. in 2001, in a period when professional basketball was less perimeter-oriented and geared toward taller players who played closer to the rim. While he was never a scoring leader or even a

full-time starter, his height, professionalism and ability to defend against other centers made him a valuable asset to six N.B.A. teams in a professional career that lasted 13 seasons.

When he retired in 2014, Collins said he hoped to be remembered as "a great teammate, someone who always sacrificed for the team."

But his achievements on the court were eclipsed by an essay he wrote in Sports Illustrated in 2013 that was featured on the cover.

"I'm a 34-year-old N.B.A. center. I'm Black and I'm gay," it began.

In the essay, Collins said he was spurred to speak publicly after his former Stanford University roommate, Joe Kennedy, a congressman from Massachusetts at the time, came out.
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In Xi-Trump Relationship, Flattery Cloaks Mistrust

Race for Edge on A.I. May Hinder Talks About Risks

By VIVIAN WANG

As President Trump and President Xi Jinping of China meet in Beijing this week, they are expected to discuss, for the first time, how to manage the risks of artificial intelligence. But in many ways, the two countries seem farther apart than ever on that question.

Both the United States and China are racing to develop A.I.-powered weapons that could wreak immense damage without human involvement. Powerful new A.I. models could enable cyberattacks that might cripple the world's banks and power grids. Experts have also raised the alarm about how A.I. could be misused by terrorists or even become sentient and wipe out humankind.

But the United States and China are locked in a battle for supremacy in A.I. that has left policymakers and some researchers increasingly wary of engagement, even as they warn of the technology's risks. In both countries, many policymakers fear that imposing guardrails on A.I. development — for example, curtailing the technology's ability to create bioweapons — would give the other country an opportunity to race ahead.

In recent weeks, U.S. officials have boasted that A.I. is helping them choose targets in the U.S. war in Iran. China, in a giant military parade last year, showed off drones that were designed to fly autonomously alongside fighter jets.

Even those who favor cooperation must tread lightly for fear of political blowback, amid fraught geopolitical ties between the two countries.

For example, the organizers of NeurIPS, a major academic forum for A.I. development, announced earlier this year that they would not accept papers from researchers at institutions subject to U.S. sanctions, including multiple major Chinese institutions and companies. The organizers eventually backtracked, but many Chinese scholars said they would boycott the forum in protest anyway.

When Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont brought Chinese and American A.I. researchers together for a public forum in Washington about how the countries could cooperate on preventing A.I.-related risks, he said.
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Each Leader Is Wary of a Rival Power's Global Ambition

By LUKE BROADWATER

BEIJING — Just weeks ago, after the U.S. military seized a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, President Trump said he suspected that the Chinese government was attempting to sneak a "gift" past America's blockade and into the hands of Iran.

"I thought I had an understanding with President Xi," Mr. Trump said in an interview with CNBC, calling himself "surprised." He added: "But that's all right. That's the way war goes, right?"

China has rejected Mr. Trump's accusation. But the incident underscores the uneasy nature of the relationship between Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi, China's leader, with the American president in Beijing for a summit between two of the world's most powerful men.

Mr. Trump, who has long wanted to court relationships with the world's strongmen, has cultivated what he describes as a friendship with Mr. Xi, referring to him as "a brilliant leader."

"He's a wonderful guy," Mr. Trump said this week before departing for Beijing. "He's a friend of mine."

Mr. Xi, in turn, has flattered Mr. Trump with ceremony on a scale rarely afforded foreign leaders, turning a state visit during his first term into a theatrical display of pomp and symbolism. On Wednesday, Mr. Trump was greeted by a military honor guard as well as men and women dressed in blue and white waving Chinese and American flags.

But beneath the public displays of warmth, the two men are at the center of the most consequential geopolitical rivalry of the 21st century. Their relationship is marked just as much by mistrust and confrontation as it is niceties.

For each public compliment, there is another maneuver in a trade war between the two countries. For each assertion of deep friendship, there is an uneasiness about the other's military ambitions. For each attempt at flattery, there is an accompanying suspicion.

"Xi Jinping is not somebody who's very sentimental about personal relationships, even inside his inner circle, never mind with what he sees as the leader of his main geopolitical foe," said Jonathan A. Czin, the chairman of For-
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More on the U.S.-China Summit

The war in Iran has cast a shadow as talks begin that could shape the next stage of rivalry between two powers. Coverage at nytimes.com.

20,000 Trucks Daily: Life Near A Fast-Growing Warehouse Hub

By CAM RODRIGUEZ

JOLIET, Ill. — It's a typical weekday afternoon at the intersection of Route 53 and Laraway Road, 40 miles southwest of Chicago, and semi trucks thunder by in a steady stream.

They start at the sprawling warehouse complexes on the fringes of the city of Joliet, rumble alongside the fading polyester petals of a roadside memorial for someone who died in a truck crash and roll past the ball fields where youth teams play, carrying goods for Amazon, IKEA, Walmart, Target and Dollar Tree.

In the next 10 minutes, 150 trucks will pass through the intersection. If lined up end to end, they would stretch out more than two miles.

Three decades ago, this area



JAMIE KELTER DAVIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Manhattan, Ill., has increased its truck enforcement patrol.

was mostly prairie sprinkled with quiet subdivisions. But the early 2000s ushered in the age of online shopping. Then came the rise of next-day delivery. America's retailers needed warehouses, fast.
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Insults, Insults and More Insults
At the Netflix Is a Joke festival in Los Angeles, roasts and podcasts were hot, and the humor was often dark. PAGE C1

Surrounded by Awesomeness

An immersive experience in Philadelphia, with Imani Lee Williams, below, finds wonders in the everyday. PAGE C1



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The Good News for Putin
Despite its long slog in Ukraine and setbacks in the Middle East and South America, Russia is benefiting from some of America's problems. PAGE A4

Chaos in Philippines Senate
The sound of gunshots, apparently from inside the chamber, was broadcast on live TV as an ally of the former leader, Rodrigo Duterte, faced arrest. PAGE A6

Starmer and Biden
Many of the British prime minister's former supporters are calling for him to step aside, as happened with the American president in mid-2024. PAGE A12

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Black residents in Fayette County, Tenn., won a new electoral map. They worry it may change. PAGE A13

Trump-I.R.S. Settlement Eyed
One of the terms under review is for the agency to drop any audits of the president, and his family members. PAGE A20

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Kevin M. Warsh, President Trump's pick to replace Jerome H. Powell, will take the helm at a highly uncertain moment for the economy. PAGE B1

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Film Critic With Sting
Rex Reed, a reviewer and interviewer who fawned over Old Hollywood stars and sparred with Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, was 87. PAGE B11



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Carl Benedikt Frey PAGE A23

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Scheffler vs. McIlroy, Please
Two titans of golf keep winning majors but avoiding each other on Sundays. One writer hopes to witness a showdown at the P.G.A. Championship. PAGE B7

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Ready to Express Herself
With the start of a solo tour in the United States, Niko Rubio, a bilingual songwriter from California, is finally zeroing in on her own voice. PAGE D5



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