



RAMON ESPINOSA Associated Press

PEOPLE USE their cellphones for light while playing dominoes on a street without electricity in Havana.

Two air pollutants' risk may be even more dire

State findings suggest an 'unacceptable' cancer threat from everyday chemicals.

By HAYLEY SMITH

Two toxic contaminants present in California's ambient air appear to be much stronger carcinogens than previously known, state environmental health officials announced Thursday.

The draft finding from the state's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment says that acrolein and ethylene oxide may pose an estimated cancer risk more than 10 times higher than benzene, a serious carcinogen linked to leukemia and other cancers.

It is the first step in a review process before final risk values are adopted, and it arrives at a time federal air-quality regulations are being reined in.

"If the early air monitoring results bear out, and if the draft cancer values developed are close to what eventually becomes final, then each air contaminant poses an unacceptable cancer risk," said Kris Thayer, OEHHA's director.

The update reflects the state's evolving understanding of its most dangerous pollutants, which has shifted over the decades from visible pollutants, such as smog, to more invisible ones that cause cancer, heart disease and other health harms.

It comes only two months after the Trump administration's Environmental Protection Agency moved to roll back standards on ethylene oxide, or EtO, in an effort to save millions of dollars in compliance costs for facilities that use the chemical for medical sterilization. The administration said it acted to "safeguard the supply of essential medical equipment," but experts said the [See Chemicals, A7]

As its oil runs out, Cuba is turning to capitalists

Once-persecuted private businesses hold key to salvaging what's left of island nation's economy

By JIM WYSS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — To Fidel Castro and Cuba's communist elite, private businesses were totems of capitalist evil.

Now, with the country running out of food and fuel, the regime on the brink and anger spreading in the streets, it's those private businesses — run by once-persecuted, small-scale capitalists — that hold the key to salvaging what's left of Cuba's economy.

That salvage operation can't come fast enough for President Trump's administration, which has imposed a de facto energy blockade on the Caribbean nation. According to the Associated Press, the Justice Department is preparing to seek an indictment against Fidel's

brother, former Cuban President Raúl Castro. The potential indictment is connected to Castro's alleged role in the 1996 shooting down of four planes operated by the Miami-based exile group Brothers to the Rescue, according to sources familiar with the case, AP reported Friday. Castro was defense minister at the time.

Trump's spy chief visited Cuba this week, a day after the country said it had completely run out of diesel and fuel oil, to stress that radical change is needed before the administration begins to dial back the pressure. Havana has frustrated the U.S. over a lack of progress in opening its economy and political system.

It's this narrow stretch — between a [See Cuba, A4]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

A TRASH interceptor will be installed on the San Gabriel River near Seal Beach.

Olympics spur effort to keep trash from rivers out of ocean

By LILA SEIDMAN

Rivers that wind through Los Angeles County have a trashy reputation. Literally.

In many stretches, you'd be hard-pressed to stroll along the banks of the San Gabriel or Los Angeles rivers without meeting abandoned water bottles, candy wrappers, golf balls, sad-looking teddy bears, even shopping carts.

On the rare occasions when rain graces the semi-arid region, it sweeps all that debris into the coastal communities where they drain — and out into the Pacific Ocean, wreaking havoc on an ecosystem where fish, sea lions and surfers frolic.

By the 2028 Olympics, a coalition of city, county, state and private partners hopes to change that by deploying trash-intercepting devices in the Los Angeles

and San Gabriel rivers, officials announced Wednesday.

The plan is to prevent hundreds of tons of garbage from getting to the ocean.

This "almost has a dreamlike quality to it for me," Seal Beach City Councilmember Joe Kalmick said at the news conference.

Living in the beach city for more than 50 years, he wondered why nothing [See Trash, A14]

Trump's tonal shift yields few results in China

Still, both sides hail appearance of a U.S. reset with President Xi as a breakthrough.

By MICHAEL WILNER

BEIJING — A conciliatory President Trump on Friday hailed success in his state visit to China, claiming a tonal reset with Xi Jinping despite departing Beijing with few concrete achievements.

The visual spectacle around Trump's visit was itself considered a breakthrough by the two sides, who expressed an eagerness entering the talks to move on from a years-long stretch of deteriorating relations.

But the U.S. delegation boarded Air Force One on Friday afternoon with little else to show from a summit the president had trumpeted for weeks as a historic event.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the two sides had agreed to open direct dialogue on safety concerns over artificial intelligence, without detailing what the channel would look like. The president's trade repre-

sentative said China had agreed to robust investments in the U.S. economy that went unacknowledged by Beijing.

And at a final meeting before his departure, Trump claimed that he and his Chinese host shared similar views on Iran, the dangers of its nuclear program and the problems with its control over the Strait of Hormuz. Xi sat by his side in silence.

On the flight home, Trump told reporters that the summit was "a pretty historic couple days."

He denied asking Xi to pressure the Iranians to reopen the strait "because I don't need favors."

"I think he will, I think, automatically," Trump said. "He'd like to see it opened up. He gets about 40% of his energy ... from the strait."

"We feel very similar on Iran, we want that to end," Trump said Friday. "We don't want them to have a nuclear weapon. We want the straits opened, and we want them to get it ended, because it's a crazy thing — they're a little bit crazy."

Chinese state media touted the trip as a "reset" in a relationship fraught with rivalry and suspicion. But [See China, A4]

The murky case of a former mayor

Since her plea, two views have emerged of Arcadia's Eileen Wang: spy or victim.

By BRITNY MEJIA AND REBECCA ELLIS

As Eileen Wang and her supporters tell it, the former Arcadia mayor was led astray by a man she trusted and loved.

After chasing her political ambitions in the San Gabriel Valley suburb, Wang, 58, won a City Council seat in 2022 with the help of a campaign advisor who was also her romantic partner. Two years later, he was charged by federal authorities with secretly working on behalf of the Chinese government.

Wang, a naturalized U.S. citizen, distanced herself from her ex and remained in office, becoming mayor earlier this year. The scandal

had mostly quieted — until Monday, on the eve of President Trump's planned trip to Beijing, when a plea deal was unsealed revealing Wang's own murky role as an agent for China.

Now, Wang has become a national political talking point, with critics painting her as a calculating foreign agent who sought to infiltrate the American government and undermine democracy.

Katie Miller, wife of top Trump advisor Stephen Miller, blasted Wang on social media site X as a "spy."

"This is pure China trying to influence U.S. politics and U.S. elections," Katie Miller said on Fox News.

Back home, some of Wang's former colleagues in local government say they repeatedly tried to raise alarms about her.

"There were red flags everywhere," said Sharon Kwan, an Arcadia City [See Agent, A14]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

DUCKS' FUTURE BRIGHT

Chris Kreider, above, and Anaheim saw magical playoff run end in loss to Vegas, but club showed potential with a skilled young core. **SPORTS, D12**

Front-runner is focus of debate

Candidates take aim at Becerra at last face-off before the primary. Coverage and analysis inside. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Clouds, then sun.
L.A. Basin: 71/59. **B8**

Markets **A11**
Opinion Voices **A13**

Kars4Kids jingle is pulled off air

Court ruling from O.C. finds the longtime ad to be misleading, banning it in state. **BUSINESS, A9**

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A super-strength El Niño appears on track

By RONG-GONG LIN II

The likelihood of a potentially powerful El Niño taking shape in the Pacific Ocean is rising, heightening concerns that Southern California could be in for an extreme rainy season.

There is now an 82% chance that El Niño is likely to emerge over the next few months, up from the 61% chance estimated a month

ago. And there's now a 96% chance that the climate pattern — characterized by warmer ocean waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific — will be in force this winter, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center said Thursday.

It remains to be seen how strong this iteration of El Niño could be. There's up to a 37% chance that it will be "very strong" by the end of

the year, up from a forecast of 25% issued last month.

There's also a 30% chance El Niño will be "strong," a 22% chance it'll be "moderate," and a 9% chance it'll be "weak," forecasters said.

"The tropics are changing quickly, so we have increasing confidence that we will transition to El Niño within the next couple of months — and also a higher likelihood that this event may be a strong event by this

coming fall." Nathaniel Johnson, meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, said in an interview Thursday.

Climate scientist Zachary Labe, of the nonprofit Climate Central, said that "clearly, an El Niño is coming our way."

"This is really indicating that we are headed for po- [See El Niño, A7]