"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

LATE EDITION
Today, clouds giving way to sunshine, cool, high 38. **Tonight,** mainly clear, low 29. **Tomorrow,** sunshine and some clouds, becoming breezy, high 42. Weather map, Page A26.

VOL. CLXXII .... No. 59,686 © 2023 The New York Times Company NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023 $3.00



ALAIN JOCARD/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Anger Over Pension Proposal Rocks France
President Emmanuel Macron is forging ahead with plans to raise the retirement age to 64, despite fierce resistance. Page A13.

Outlook Dims For Oil Giants After Big 2022

Global Changes Put a Damper on Spending

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS

Exxon Mobil made $56 billion in profit last year, its largest annual haul ever. Chevron earned $36 billion, also a company record. But after a bountiful 2022, the outlook for those companies and other big oil and gas producers is cloudy.

They benefited for much of last year from higher prices for nearly all fuels as the continued recovery from the pandemic slowdown increased demand and the Russian invasion of Ukraine strained supplies. The landscape already looks different.

Exxon's fourth-quarter profit of $12.75 billion, while strong, was down sharply from the $19.7 billion it earned in the third quarter. Oil prices have settled to a level more than a third lower than their peak shortly after the Ukraine war began last February, and natural gas prices have crashed by 70 percent from their highs in August, mostly because of an unseasonably warm winter in much of Europe and the United States.

"We don't know what's ahead in 2023," Mike Wirth, Chevron's chief executive, told analysts last week, adding that the uncertainty called for "operational discipline."

The U.S. Energy Department has projected that prices for Brent crude oil, the global benchmark, will average $83 a barrel this year — historically high, but 18 percent below 2022 levels. Gasoline-refining margins will slide by nearly 30 percent this year, the department forecasts, leading to a national average price for regular gasoline of $3.30 a gallon, more than a dollar below prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. The department also expects natural gas prices to average 25 percent below last year's.

While lower prices are a comfort for consumers, they take a toll on companies' bottom lines.

Oil and gas companies expect a profitable 2023, but revenues and profits should drop below those in 2022. And even while celebrating their profits, executives caution that the oil business is subject to abrupt swings in supply and demand.

So the companies have promised investors not to repeat the past mistake of drilling so much that prices crash. They have been hesitant to move aggressively to expand production — as President Biden urged them to do when supplies were pinched — or take meaningful steps to build profitability around cleaner fuels. That restraint could mean tighter markets and higher prices unless there is a serious recession.

Instead, executives said they were committed to returning sur-

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NEIGHBORS HELP MOSCOW SIDESTEP WEST'S SANCTIONS

SURGE IN ALLIES' TRADE

Targeted Goods Flow In, Keeping the Russian Economy Afloat

By ANA SWANSON

WASHINGTON — A strange thing happened with smartphones in Armenia last summer.

Shipments from other parts of the world into the tiny former Soviet republic began to balloon to more than 10 times the value of phone imports in previous months. At the same time, Armenia recorded an explosion in its exports of smartphones to a beleaguered ally: Russia.

The trend, which was repeated for washing machines, computer chips and other products in a handful of other Asian countries last year, provides evidence of some of the new lifelines that are keeping the Russian economy afloat. Recent data show surges in trade for some of Russia's neighbors and allies, suggesting that countries like Turkey, China, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan



SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Turkish cargo ship at a Black Sea port in Poti, Georgia.

are stepping in to provide Russia with many of the products that Western countries have tried to cut off as punishment for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Those sanctions — which include restrictions on Russia's largest banks along with limits on the sale of technology that its military could use — are blocking access to a variety of products. Reports regularly filter out of Russia about consumers frustrated by high-priced or shoddy goods, ranging from milk and household appliances to computer software and medication, said Maria Snegovaya, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in an event at the think tank last month.

Even so, Russian trade appears to have largely bounced back to where it was before the invasion of

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Tallying Dead, Pakistanis Fear Terror's Return

*This article is by **Christina Goldbaum**, **Salman Masood** and **Zia ur-Rehman**.*

A suicide bomber's blast ended more than 100 lives in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar, devastating a mosque in a supposedly secure sector of the city, and sending smoke plumes into the sky and panic through the streets.

But more than that: The attack on Monday knocked a terrorism-scarred city back in time, to the era a decade ago when Peshawar became synonymous with the wreckage of a militant campaign that profoundly changed a nation.

In the years after 2015, when Pakistani Taliban fighters and other militants were mostly pushed out of the region — many into neighboring Afghanistan — Peshawar residents dared to hope that the days of random terrorist attacks were behind them.

But on Tuesday, as emergency responders pulled body after body from the rubble, questions immediately intensified about the government's ability to fight a new wave of militancy amid a seemingly intractable economic and political crisis.

The bombing was one of the bloodiest suicide attacks to hit Pakistan in years, killing at least 101 people and wounding 217 others, hospital officials said. Many of the casualties were police officers and government employees who had gone to pray at the mosque, in a heavily guarded neighborhood near several important government and military buildings.

The attack has added to recent evidence that the Pakistani Taliban, a faction of which claimed re-

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A Black Exodus and Its Effect on New York City

Cost of Living Leads to a Stark Decline in Schoolchildren

By TROY CLOSSON and NICOLE HONG

Athenia Rodney is a product of the upward mobility New York City once promised Black Americans. She grew up in mostly Black neighborhoods in Brooklyn, graduated from public schools and attended a liberal arts college on a full scholarship. She went on to start her own event-planning business in the city.

But as Mrs. Rodney's own family grew, she found herself living in a cramped one-bedroom rental, where her three children shared a bunk bed in the living room. It was hard to get them into programs that exposed them to green spaces or swim classes. As she scrolled through friends' social media posts showing off trampolines in spacious backyards in Georgia, the solution became clearer: Leave.

Last summer, the family bought a five-bedroom home in Snellville, Ga.

"I felt like it became increasingly difficult to raise a family in New York," Mrs. Rodney said.

The Rodneys are part of an exodus of Black residents from New York City. From 2010 to 2020, a decade during which the city's population showed a surprising increase led by a surge in Asian and Hispanic residents, the number of Black residents decreased. The decline mirrored a national trend of younger Black professionals, middle-class families and retirees leaving cities in the Northeast and Midwest for the South.

The city's Black population has declined by nearly 200,000 people in the past two decades, or about 9 percent. Now, about one in five residents are non-Hispanic Black, compared with one in four in 2000, according to the latest census data.

The decline is starkest among the youngest New Yorkers: The number of Black children and teenagers living in the city fell more than 19 percent from 2010 to

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NICOLE CRAINE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Athenia Rodney and her family left New York for a house and more opportunity in Snellville, Ga.

China Moves Past a Covid Spike In a Rush to Get Back to Normal

By CHRIS BUCKLEY and AMY CHANG CHIEN

When China abruptly abandoned "zero Covid," accelerating an onslaught of infections and deaths, many feared a prolonged tide rippling from cities into villages. Now, two months later, the worst seems to have passed, and the government is eager to shift attention to economic recovery.

Doctors who were mobilized across China to treat a rush of Covid patients say in phone interviews that the number of patients they are now seeing has fallen. Towns and villages that had hunkered down under the surge of infections and funerals are stirring to life. Health officials have declared that Covid cases "already peaked in late December 2022."

"Now the pandemic is already being forgotten from people's minds," Gao Xiaobin, a doctor on the outskirts of a small city in Anhui Province in eastern China, said by telephone. "Nobody is wearing masks anywhere. That's all gone."

The true toll of the outbreak is hard to delineate, with infections and deaths shrouded by censorship and poor data collection. Officially, China has reported nearly 79,000 confirmed Covid-related deaths that occurred in hospitals since Dec. 8. But researchers say that is a drastic undercount because it excludes deaths outside hospitals.

The Communist Party hopes to bustle past such questions and fo-

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Longer Lives and Fewer Births: Is Italy 'Destined to Disappear'?

Attempting to Defuse a Demographic Bomb

By JASON HOROWITZ

PIACENZA, Italy — On one side of a glass wall, three toddlers in a nursery school flattened play dough with plastic rolling pins. On the other, three old women in a nursing home tapped the pane to get their attention.

"Let's say hi to the nonni," the children's teacher said before leading them through a door that connected the two rooms.

The children stopped to play with the magnifying glass of a delighted 89-year-old woman who had been using it to read obituaries. Then the toddlers, all 2 years old, took an elevator upstairs, where nursing home residents waited to read them picture books in a small library.

"It's an extraordinary thing," said one of the residents, Giacomo Scaramuzza, 100. "People think we are from two different worlds, but it's not true. We are in the same world. And maybe I give them something, too. There is an exchange."

Piacenza's Elderly and Children Together, an experimental project in the country's most renowned region for childhood education and elder care, seeks to connect the vulnerable at both extremes of life. But it also puts Italy's two existential challenges under one roof.

Italy's population is aging and shrinking at the fastest rate in the

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Used-Car Boom Is Ending
Sales and prices have been dropping, putting pressure on companies like Carvana. PAGE B1

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A renewed focus on fiscal restraint in the standoff with Democrats poses its own political risks. PAGE B1

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Finding that the Manhattan district attorney's office had withheld evidence, a judge dismissed all charges against Joseph Franco. PAGE A22

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The country is razed by war and environmental plunder — and it may be the future of the Catholic Church. PAGE A6

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Lhakpa Sherpa has climbed the peak 10 times, the most by a woman. She trains at her job at Whole Foods. PAGE B9

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Cindy Williams, who teamed with Penny Marshall on the sitcom, was 75. PAGE B12



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