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Lindsay Shachnow/Post-Gazette
Bystanders watch as emergency crews battle a fire on the 5600 block of Forward Avenue in Squirrel Hill on Tuesday.

Israel strikes Hamas base in Qatar

By Josef Federman and Jon Gambrell
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Israel struck the headquarters of Hamas' political leadership in Qatar on Tuesday as the group's top figures gathered to consider a U.S. proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The strike on the territory of a U.S. ally marked a stunning escalation and risked upending talks aimed at winding down the war and freeing hostages.

The attack angered Qatar, an energy-rich Gulf nation hosting thousands of American troops that has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas throughout the 23-month-old war and even before. It condemned what it referred to as a "flagrant violation of all international laws and norms" as smoke rose over its capital, Doha. Other key U.S. allies in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, promised their support to Qatar.

Hamas said in a statement its top leaders survived the strike but that five lower-level members were killed, including the son of Khalil al-Hayya — Hamas' leader for Gaza and its top negotiator — three bodyguards, and the head of Mr. al-Hayya's office. Hamas, which has sometimes only confirmed the assassination of its leaders months later, offered no immediate proof that Mr. al-Hayya and other senior figures had survived.

The United States said Israel alerted it before the strike. But American officials

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'LIVES ARE CHANGED'



Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette
A resident shields her face from smoke as her apartment building burns on Tuesday.

Massive fire destroys apartments in Squirrel Hill, displaces dozens

By Lindsay Shachnow and Megan Guza
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

For hours on Tuesday, a fire at a Forward Avenue apartment building sent columns of thick smoke billowing into the sky over Squirrel Hill, creating a haze that stretched across the Parkway East as crews battled persistent flames that displaced dozens.

"Their whole lives are changed today," Donny Fast said as he stood among the dozens of residents, first responders and curious onlookers who had gathered in the Lifetime Automotive parking lot.

Mr. Fast, an emergency response coordinator for BMS CAT, a Richland-based water and fire restoration company, watched as flames punctuated the plumes of smoke.

The fire had been burning for less than two hours at that point. The first call for the flames came just before 8:30 a.m., and the first firefighters on the scene helped evacuate the residents, a few of whom believed the fire alarm they

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Tree of Life rebuild to begin next year

By Megan Guza
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Construction on the new Tree of Life building in Squirrel Hill — a multi-use space that will mark the site of the worst antisemitic attack in the U.S. and memorialize the 11 people killed in the 2018 shooting — will begin early next year, with the goal of opening to the public in 2028.

The updated designs for the space at the corner of Shady and Wilkins avenues were released Monday by the design and architecture teams.

The physical building will ultimately have a smaller footprint than originally planned, according to the renderings from Studio Libeskind and IKM Architecture.

Demolition at the synagogue site began in early 2024, and roughly 80% of the massive stone structure has been demolished. The portions of the building that remain will become part of the larger campus that will be called simply Tree of Life.

"As we planned the museum and began to more substantively develop programs, we had the rare opportunity to pause the process to evaluate our progress, consider the input we've received from stakeholders across the community, and make a strategic decision about our

SEE TREE OF LIFE, PAGE A-3



Studio Libeskind
A rendering shows the final design for the new Tree of Life building at the corner of Shady and Wilkins avenues in Squirrel Hill. The building will include space for a museum, classrooms, and religious services.

Test scores see major decline

Experts: Post-pandemic drop raises concerns

By Megan Tomasic
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pennsylvania education experts are raising concerns about how students are rebounding post-pandemic following Tuesday's release of new federal math, science and reading testing data, but some remain optimistic that state numbers will outpace the sluggish nationwide scores.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card, released data showing that, nationally, eighth grade science scores fell 4 points since 2019, while math and reading scores for high school seniors dropped 3 points in the same period.

State-by-state results have not been released.

Across Pennsylvania, some experts are watching to see if certain factors seen in recent years could impact the state's overall test scores — factors such as resources provided to districts or shifting school enrollment numbers.

"I'm absolutely concerned about it," Josh Bleiberg, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, said of the national scores. "I think part of the Pennsylvania-specific concern that I have is about enrollment."

Student enrollment, Mr. Bleiberg said, has been declining nationwide, including in Pittsburgh, for years.

That decline makes it difficult for

SEE SCORES, PAGE A-4

STATE BUDGET IMPASSE

Domestic abuse advocates press for resolution

By Benjamin Kail
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Every day the state budget impasse drags on, almost 250 survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault are going without vital support services in Pennsylvania, according to an advocacy group.

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence says the failure to pass a state budget has sparked a delay in critical funding that places thousands of survivors and their family members "in immediate danger," and has pushed cash-strapped programs closer to laying off staff or

closing entirely.

"Without state funding, programs are forced to turn survivors away, hotlines go silent, shelters close their doors, and victims remain trapped in unsafe homes," Susan Higginbotham, the coalition's CEO, told the Post-Gazette in an emailed statement. "Every day the legislature fails to act, more lives are placed at risk."

Members of the coalition and leaders of several community support programs plan to gather in the rotunda of the state Capitol on Wednesday afternoon to pressure

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Morning fog; otherwise, mostly sunny. Daytime high, 77; tonight's low, 50.
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