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69 suspects arrested on sex trade charges by the Houston Police Department



Inside C2

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Canada says NAFTA agreement possible by Friday, but hard work ahead

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Canada said an agreement to salvage the trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is possible by a Friday deadline, but it will be hard work to resolve specific issues as talks with the United States entered a second day. After more than a year of talks, Mexico and the United States announced a bilateral deal on Monday, clearing the way for Canada to rejoin talks to update 24-year-old NAFTA which accounts for over \$1 trillion in annual trade between the three nations. U.S. President Donald Trump set a Friday deadline for the three countries to reach an in-principle agreement, and warned he could proceed with a deal with Mexico alone and levy tariffs on Canada if it does not come on board with revised trade terms. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said meeting the Friday deadline is a possibility and Foreign Minister and lead negotiator Chrystia Freeland said she was encouraged by the talks and progress so far.

"We recognize that there is a possibility of getting there by Friday, but it is only a possibility, because it will hinge on whether or not there is ultimately a good deal for Canada," he said at a press conference in northern Ontario on Wednesday. "No NAFTA deal is better than a bad NAFTA deal."

Freeland said she was optimistic that progress can be made this week, but she added: "When it comes to specific issues, we have a huge amount of work to do."

She declined to name the specific issues, but said on Tuesday that Mexico's concessions on auto rules of origin and labor rights was a breakthrough.

Ottawa is also ready to make concessions on Canada's protected dairy market in a bid to save a dispute-settlement system, The Globe and Mail reported late on Tuesday.

After being sidelined from the talks for more than two months, Freeland will be under pressure to accept terms the United States and Mexico worked out. The U.S. Congress also wants a deal that includes Canada

The three countries are aiming to seal a trade pact by Friday to allow Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto to sign it before he leaves office at the end of November. The timeline accommodates a 90-day waiting period under U.S. trade law before Trump can sign the pact. The political implications are big for the other two countries too. Republicans face mid-term elections in November and Trudeau a national one expected by October 2019.

"The strategy is to get a better deal," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said on Wednesday. One of the issues for Canada in the revised deal is the U.S. effort to dump the Chapter 19 dispute resolution mechanism that hinders the United States from pursuing anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said on Monday that Mexico had agreed to eliminate the mechanism.

To save that mechanism, Ottawa plans to change one rule that effectively blocked American farmers from exporting ultrafiltered milk, an ingredient in cheesemaking, to Canada, the Globe and Mail reported, citing sources. Trudeau repeated on Wednesday that he will defend Canada's dairy industry.

Other hurdles include intellectual property rights and extensions of copyright protections to 75 years from 50, a higher threshold than Canada has previously supported.

"I think that what they probably need by Friday is some indication from Canada to the Americans that it's ready to play ball, that they're ready to negotiate in good faith," said Mark Warner, a trade lawyer with MAAW Law, which specializes in Canadian and U.S. law.

"If Chrystia Freeland goes down there and she starts going on and on about red lines again, then I think it's all over," he added.



FILE PHOTO: A transport truck hauls new Toyota trucks into the United States from Mexico

Drones and stakeouts: how Tesla 'haters' put pressure on CEO Musk

SAN FRANCISCO/WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An online army of skeptics and amateur sleuths that has spent years promoting bets against Tesla Inc senses an opportunity to renew pressure on the electric carmaker after the failure of Chief Executive Elon Musk's plan to take it private. But Musk's abrupt Friday announcement that he was dropping his plan and media reports of a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) probe into his tweets have galvanized Tesla bears.

"It's such a ridiculous situation," said Brodie Ferguson, a 25-year-old Canadian whose interest in Tesla stems from watching videos about Musk's other engineering ventures. "It's ... energized our skepticism," Ferguson, who said he has a bearish options position on Tesla shares, told Reuters via Twitter.

Ferguson is only one of thousands of Tesla bears who use Twitter to crowdsource financial data, photos, satellite imagery and video footage of Tesla facilities to shed light on the company's production and sales figures to support their view that the stock is overvalued.

A spokesman for Tesla declined to comment on short-sellers, who are often dubbed "haters" by Musk's supporters on Twitter.

Unlike Wall Street's most famous short-sellers such as Jim Chanos and David Einhorn, this community is mostly retail investors and hobbyist shoe-leather investigators



FILE PHOTO: SpaceX founder Musk at a press conference following the first launch of a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket in Cape Canaveral

who coalesce around Twitter feeds like @TeslaCharts and \$TSLAQ FinTwit.

"A lot of the people in this bear community for Tesla are just ordinary folks," said @Latrilife, a Twitter user and small business owner who said he has a bearish options position.

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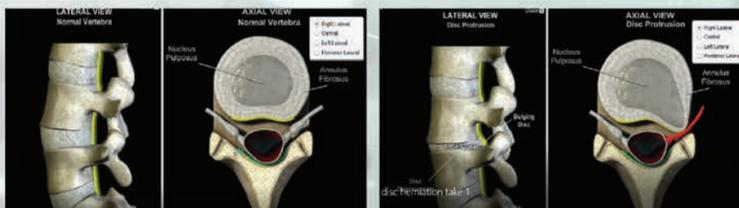
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69 suspects arrested on sex trade charges by the Houston Police Department Vice Division

The Houston Police Department Vice Division released the mugshots of 69 suspects arrested and charged for allegedly engaging in human trafficking either as pimps or johns.

Charged with the suppression of "prostitution, illegal gambling, human trafficking, sexually oriented business enforcement, and Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) code violations, the Vice Division worked through the summer to help diminish the sex trade business in Houston.

The suspects pictured were booked from June 1 through July 30, 2018, and face charges for either compelling prostitution or soliciting prostitution. In a press release, HPD Vice Division

Captain James Dale stated, "We hope by publishing these suspects' photos we will raise awareness of the issue that is human trafficking and put the community on notice that we will no longer tolerate these crimes in our neighborhoods."

Last week, Harris County Precinct 4 Constables announced the arrest of 11 men who allegedly solicited prostitution in the areas of schools and day cares in north Harris County. Another suspect was still at-large.

The Houston Police Department Vice Division released the mugshots of 69 suspects allegedly involved human trafficking either as pimps or johns for the months of June and July 2018.



Jose Altuve, George Springer, Lance McCullers and more fête teammate Joe Smith's HelpCureHD luncheon

How do you get half of a World Series-clinching baseball team to come to a charity luncheon on game day? If you're Joe Smith, just text them. The new Astros' pitcher and his wife, TNT sports reporter Allie LaForce, had no idea which players - if any - would show up at the couple's inaugural HelpCureHD luncheon at Tootsies on Tuesday, which was scheduled mere hours before the team's showdown against the Oakland Athletics. Though with Astros pitcher Tony Sipp and wife Kacey

Sipp, Kara McCullers and Charlise Springer arriving right on time for the pre-event reception, odds were in favor of additional player sighting or two.

Astros players Jose Altuve and George Springer crash luncheon at Tootsies to support new pitcher Joe Smith's Huntington's disease fundraising efforts.

A tony group of non-professional athletes gathered in the mega-boutique's designer wing as well; Joanne King Herring, Ginni Mithoff, Jo Furr,

Debbie and Rudy Festari, and Princess Tatiana Galitzine Sierra and Guillermo Sierra were among those enjoying a very non-typical reception. (Hey, it's not everyday that Houston's social set orders mimosas from a make-your-own bar cart so early in the week.)

Just as creative director Fady Armanious and Monarch Hospitality Group's Tony Gutierrez ushered some 70 privy guests into a back dining room, Hall of Famer Jeff Bagwell and wife Rachel Bagwell joined the merry

bunch.

Fashion models and kale salads emerged from behind black curtains simultaneously. And then second baseman José Altuve rushed hurriedly up the catwalk.

The 2017 MVP snagged the sole empty seat. His teammate who followed, Brian McCann, wasn't so lucky. With every chair filled, Smith graciously relinquished his spot.

By then the controlled chaos started to really simmer. Host committee member Dr. Erin Stimming leapt from her seat mid-fashion presenta-



Astros Will Harris, from left, Joe Smith, Lance McCullers Jr., and Brad Peacock at the luncheon at Tootsies benefiting Help Cure HD.

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Editor's Choice



Members of the Terek Cossack Host communities point at targets during the Youth Cossack Games in Stavropol region



A Brazilian soldier on an armored vehicle patrols during an operation against drug gangs in Salgueiro slums complex in Sao Goncalo, near Rio de Janeiro



U.S. President Donald Trump makes announcement at the White House in Washington



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) execute criminal search warrants and arrest more than 100 employees in Sumner



U.S. Senator John McCain lies in state in the rotunda of the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix



A woman dances in the line on the second day of a public viewing of Aretha Franklin in Detroit



U.S. Senator John McCain lies in state in the rotunda of the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix



U.S. Senator John McCain lies in state in the rotunda of the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix

Tony Award-Winning U.S. Playwright Neil Simon Dies At 91

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

(Reuters) – U.S. playwright Neil Simon, who became one of Broadway’s most prolific and popular playwrights as he combined humor, drama and introspection in works such as “The Odd Couple,” “The Goodbye Girl” and “Lost in Yonkers,” died on Sunday at the age of 91, his representatives said.

Simon died at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City of complications from pneumonia, Broadway theater representatives DKC/O&M said in a statement on Sunday. Simon was admitted to the hospital a few days ago and the pneumonia was in his lungs. Simon’s long-time publicist Bill Evans said in a Sunday phone interview. Evans said he gave Simon a kidney in 2004.

“It was wonderful to be in his life and for him to be in my life,” Evans said, calling Simon a major figure in American culture. “It has been so great to be part of all of it.”

Simon drew on his tumultuous New York Jewish upbringing in many of his works.

A new Simon play almost every theatrical season was a Broadway staple from 1960 through the mid-1990s, placing him in the ranks of America’s top playwrights. He wrote more than 40 plays that were funny, moving and immensely popular – sometimes shifting from slapstick to melodrama with the turn of a phrase.

At one point he had a record four plays running simultaneously on Broadway.



Simon was called “not just a show business success but an institution” by one New York critic. While his voice and comedy were decidedly East Coast and often



Screenwriter Neil Simon at the Paramount Studios lot in Hollywood, California April 6, 1998. (Photo/REUTERS)

reflected an ethnic Jewish experience, Simon’s works played to packed houses around the world.

He won Tony Awards for “The Odd Couple,” “Biloxi Blues” and “Lost in Yonkers” and a fourth for his overall contribution to American theater. He was nominated for 13 other Tonys.

“Lost in Yonkers” (1990), a painfully funny story about the relationship between an abusive mother and her grown children, also won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1991.

Simon’s childhood was marred by the breakup of his parents. At first he was reluctant to draw on that pain, fearing it would make his plays too dark.

Later in his career he would use his own painful experiences, such as in the semi-biographical “Brighton Beach Memoirs,” to give his work more depth.

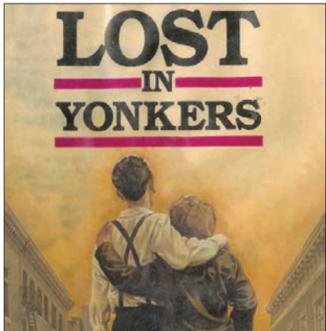
But being entertaining was his primary goal.

“When I was a kid, I climbed up on a stone ledge to watch an outdoor movie of Char-

lie Chaplin,” Simon once told Life magazine. “I laughed so hard I fell off, cut my head open and was taken to the doctor, bleeding and laughing.

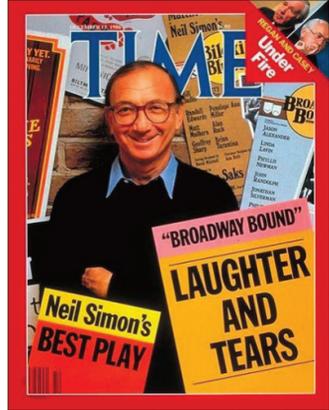
“... My idea of the ultimate achievement in a comedy is to make a whole audience fall onto the floor, writhing and laughing so hard that some of them pass out.”

Simon’s plays made him a wealthy man and many were turned into films, which made him even wealthier and earned him four Academy Award nominations. Among his works appearing on movie screens were “Barefoot in the Park,” “Plaza Suite,” “Brighton Beach Memoirs,” “Biloxi Blues” and “Broadway Bound.” “The Odd Couple” was even made into a successful television sitcom.



Early Simon works were sometimes deemed too sentimental or commercial by critics but as his career entered its third decade, the plays grew more serious, more mature. Frank Rich of the New York Times wrote of “Biloxi Blues” (1985) that Simon “at last begins to examine himself honestly, without compromises, and as a result is his most persuasively serious ef-

fort.” Marvin Neil Simon was born on July 4, 1927, in the New York City borough of the Bronx, son of Irving, a garment salesman, and Mamie Simon.



After attending New York University and the University of Denver and serving in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, Simon and his mentor, older brother Danny Simon, worked together in the 1940s writing comedy sketches for radio performer Goodman Ace.

Simon and Danny, whose living arrangements once inspired Neil’s “The Odd Couple,” then moved to television, working with such popular entertainers as Sid Caesar, Phil Silver and Jackie Gleason, and with other writers including Mel Brooks and Woody Allen.

But Simon did not like television work and in 1960 came up with “Come Blow Your Horn,” which became a modest Broadway hit. It was followed by “Barefoot in the Park” in 1963, which ran for more than 1,500 performances. Simon would go on to dominate the 1960s with “The Odd Couple,” “Sweet Charity,” “Plaza Suite” and “The Last of the Red Hot Lovers.”

In the ’70s he turned out “The Prisoner of Second Avenue,” “The Sunshine Boys” and “California Suite” while his ’80s works included “Brighton Beach Memoirs,” “Biloxi Blues,” “Broadway Bound”

and “Rumors.” Simon continued into the next decade with “Lost in Yonkers,” “Jake’s Women,” “The Goodbye Girl” and “Laughter on the 23rd Floor.”

His semi-autobiographical trilogy – “Brighton Beach Memoirs,” “Biloxi Blues” and “Broadway Bound – was a fixture on Broadway in the 1980s.

CREATIVE ‘PINBALL MACHINE’

Simon once compared his own creative process to a pinball machine, such as when he was writing “Lost in Yonkers.” The creative concept, he said, began “to move circuitously around in my brain, bouncing off one neuron to another, like a pinball that hits every number of the board repeatedly, rolls down, hits the flippers and goes bouncing back up for another go at every bell-ringing number again.”

Simon’s plays were usually set in New York with characters whose problems were similar to those experienced by Simon.



“Chapter Two,” for example, dealt with a writer whose first wife had died, trying to open himself to love a new woman. Simon’s wife of 20 years, Joan Baim, died of cancer in 1973, after which he married actress Marsha Mason, who starred in the 1979 film version of “Chapter Two.” Mason was nominated for an Oscar for 1977’s “The Goodbye Girl,” another Simon play he adapted for the screen.

Simon received Kennedy Center honors in 1995 from President Bill Clinton for his contribution to the arts and to popular culture in the 20th century.

“He challenges us and himself never to take ourselves too seriously,” Clinton said in presenting the award. “Thank you for the wit and the wisdom.”

Simon was married five times, twice to actress Diane Lander. He is survived by wife Elaine Joyce and his three daughters from different marriages, Evans said. (Courtesy oann.com)

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For over a year, the Chinese government has withheld lab samples of a rapidly evolving influenza virus from the United States — specimens needed to develop vaccines and treatments, according to federal health officials.

China Withholding Samples Of A Dangerous Flu Virus

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Health workers culling chickens in Hong Kong in 2014 following an outbreak of avian flu. (Photo Getty Images)

Director of Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that oversees vaccine development. "There's nothing to hold it back or slow it down. Every minute counts."



Blood samples infected with Flu virus.

tion. But communication has gradually worsened.



Health workers attending to an H7N9 avian flu patient in Wuhan, China, in 2017. At least four research institutions have relied upon a small group of H7N9 samples from cases in Taiwan and Hong Kong. (All four asked not to be identified for fear of further straining ties.) (Photo/ Getty Images)

Despite persistent requests from government officials and research institutions, China has not provided samples of the dangerous virus, a type of bird flu called H7N9. In the past, such exchanges have been mostly routine under rules established by the World Health Organization.

Under an agreement established by the World Health Organization, participating countries must transfer influenza samples with pandemic potential to designated research centers "in a timely manner."

Now, as the United States and China spar over trade, some scientists worry that the vital exchange of medical supplies and information could slow, hampering preparedness for the next biological threat.

That process — involving paperwork, approval through several agencies and a licensed carrier — normally takes several months, according to Dr. Larry Kerr, the director of pandemics and emerging threats at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The scenario is "unlike shortages in aluminum and soybeans," said Dr. Michael Callahan, an infectious disease specialist at Harvard Medical School.

But more than one year after a devastating wave of H7N9 infections in Asia — 766 cases were reported, almost all in China — the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is still waiting for several viral samples, the National Security Council and the W.H.O. confirmed.

"Jeopardizing U.S. access to foreign pathogens and therapies to counter them undermines our nation's ability to protect against infections which can spread globally within days."

Scientists at the Department of Agriculture have had such difficulty obtaining flu samples from China that they have stopped requesting them altogether, according to a government official who spoke anonymously because he was not authorized to discuss the matter.

Experts concur that the world's next global pandemic will likely come from a repeat offender: the flu. The H7N9 virus is one candidate.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to multiple requests for comment. The Chinese Center For Disease Control and Prevention also did not reply to inquiries regarding the transfer.

Since taking root in China in 2013, the virus has spread through poultry farms, evolving into a highly pathogenic strain that can infect humans. It has killed 40 percent of its victims.

When the H7N9 virus first appeared in China, researchers say the Chinese government at first provided timely informa-

If this strain were to become highly contagious among humans, seasonal flu vaccines would provide little to no protection. Americans have virtually no immunity.

"Pandemic influenza spreads faster than anything else," said Rick A. Bright, the di-

Yet a sudden spike in infections during the 2016-2017 outbreak wave demands intense research, said scientists aiming to understand the virus' evolution.

Recent trade tensions could worsen the problem.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative in April released a proposed list of products to be targeted for tariffs — including pharmaceutical products such as vaccines, medicines and medical devices.

So far, none of those medical products have landed on the final tariff lists. But lower-level trade negotiations with China concluded on Thursday with few signs of progress, increasing the likelihood of additional tariffs.

Did The 1918 Flu Pandemic That Killed 50 Million Originate in China?

A National Geographic article* claims that the Spanish Flu came from China and spread to Canada and then Europe. According to the story presented here, Chinese workers carried the disease to the Western Front during World War I. Go here for article: *<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/01/140123-spanish-flu-1918-china-origins-pandemic-science-health/>

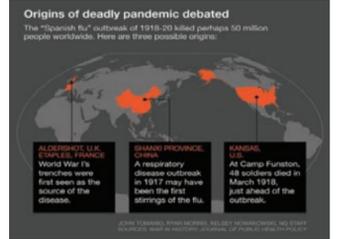
its research private. Some provinces withheld information about cases even from the central government in Beijing.

In 2005, Chinese authorities insisted an H5N1 influenza outbreak was contained, contradicting University of Hong Kong scientists who offered evidence that it was expanding. Those authorities hesitated to share viral samples from infected wild birds with the international community, concealing the scope to avoid a hit to their vast poultry industry.

Indonesia followed suit, refusing in 2007 to share specimens of H5N1 with the United States and United Kingdom, arguing that the countries would use the samples to develop a vaccine that Indonesians could not afford.

Those episodes led to the 2011 development of the W.H.O.'s Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, which aims to promote sample exchanges as well as developing countries' access to vaccines.

But for countries like China, bearing the burden of a novel virus is paradoxical. Outbreaks are expensive — the wave of H7N9 infections in 2013 alone cost China more than \$6 billion, according to the United Nations — but they can provide a head-start in developing valuable treatments.



"In a sense, China has made lemonade from lemons — converting the problem of global infectious disease threats into lifesaving and valuable commodities," Dr. Callahan said.

And now, as the H7N9 virus evolves, United States authorities worry that the Chinese have obfuscated the scale and features of this outbreak.

The Chinese government has refused to share clinical data from infected patients, according to scientists, and claims to have all but eradicated H7N9 through a single poultry vaccination campaign.

"Influenza is going to do what it does best, which is mutate," Dr. Kerr said. (Courtesy New York Times)



Influenza Patients lie in an influenza ward at a U.S. Army camp hospital in Aix-les-Baines, France, during World War I.

China hid the 2002 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, for four months and then kept the findings of

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