



\$1.3 mn was paid by a top bidder for a tuna at Tokyo fish market



Weather table with columns for location and weather conditions (LR, HR, LS, TDS).

Polar vortex brings winter storm to central US

Eastern parts of the country likely to experience bone chilling cold from today, according to weather forecasters

WASHINGTON

A major, disruptive winter storm was sweeping across the central US on Sunday, forecasters said, bringing with it a dreaded combination of snow, ice and plunging temperatures.

The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings from Kansas and Missouri where blizzard conditions are expected to New Jersey.

In the two states where blizzard warnings were in effect, travel "could be very difficult to impossible," with snow whipped around by high winds reducing visibility, the NWS said.

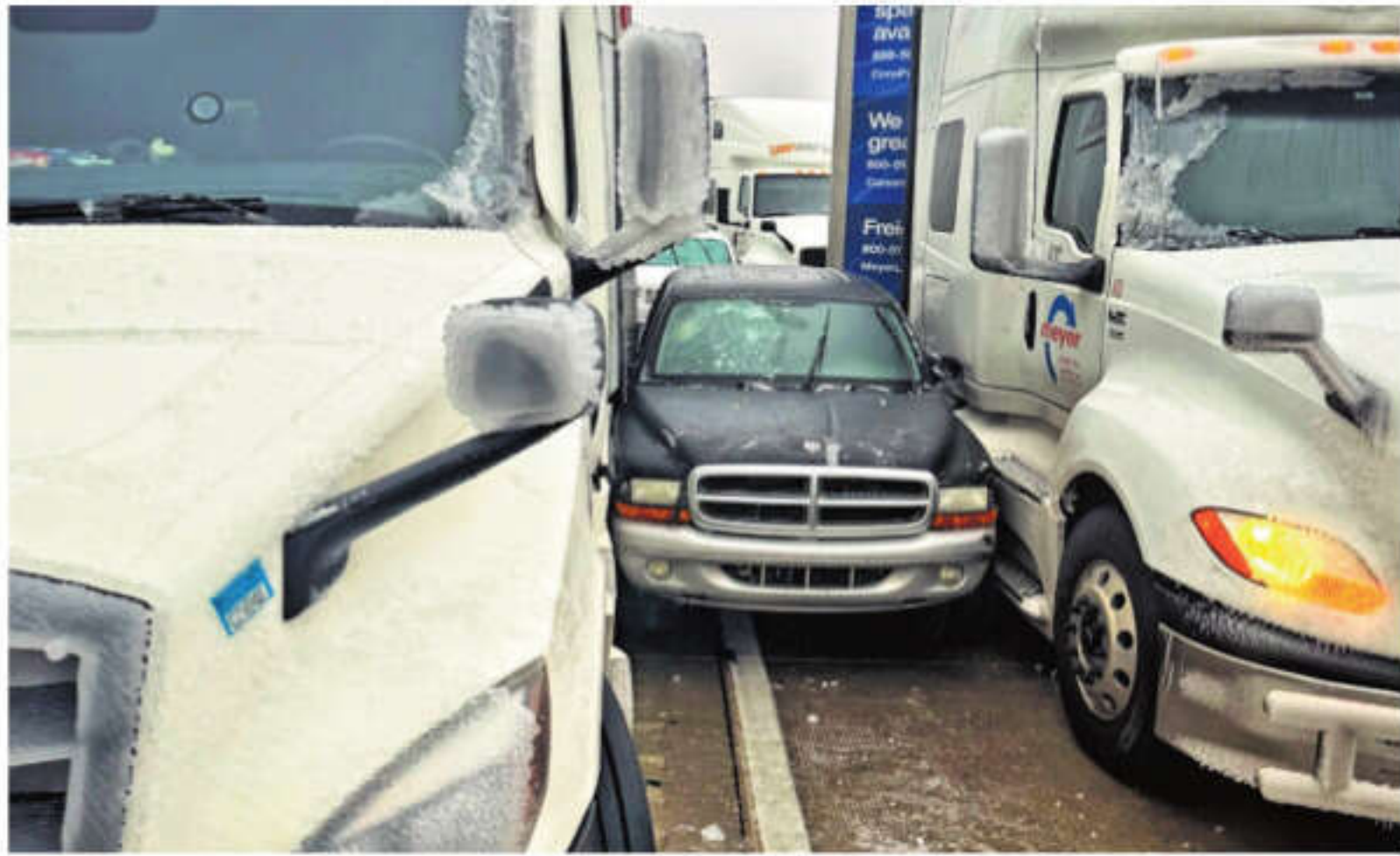
"Do not travel unless necessary!" the NWS said.

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually stays penned up around the North Pole, spinning like a top. But sometimes it escapes or stretches down to the US, Europe or Asia and that's when large numbers of people experience intense doses of cold.

Studies show a fast-warming Arctic gets some of the blame for the increase in polar vortex stretching or wandering.

By Saturday evening, widespread heavy snow was likely between central Kansas and Indiana, especially along and north of Interstate 70.

Part of the interstate was closed in central Kansas by the afternoon. Total snow and sleet accumula-



A car is wedged between two trucks during icy weather on Saturday in Salina, Kansas | AP

tions for parts of Kansas and northern Missouri were predicted to be as high as 14 inches (35.6 centimeters).

The storm was forecast to move then into the Ohio Valley, with severe travel disruptions expected. It will reach the Mid-Atlantic states on Sunday into Monday, with a hard freeze even expected as far south as Florida.

Severe thunderstorms, with the possibility of tornadoes and hail, were also possible ahead of the storm system's

cold front as it crosses the Lower Mississippi Valley, the National Weather Service warned. Parts of upstate New York saw 3 feet or more of snow from a lake effect event expected to last until late Sunday.

A fire truck, several tractor-trailers and passenger vehicles overturned west of Salina, Kansas. Rigs also jackknifed and went into ditches.

Freezing rain in Wichita, Kansas, sent authorities to multiple crashes in the morning, and police urged drivers to stay

home if possible and watch out for emergency vehicles.

"Please stay off the roads. Crews are seeing too many vehicles out and sliding off," Missouri's transportation department said on X.

Starting Monday the eastern two-thirds of the country will experience dangerous, bone-chilling cold and wind chills, forecasters said.

Temperatures could be 7 to 14 degrees Celsius below normal as the polar vortex stretches down from the high Arctic. AP

Ukraine launches assault in Kursk, surprising Russia

MOSCOW

RUSSIA said on Sunday that Ukraine had launched a "counterattack" in the western border region of Kursk, where Kyiv's forces began a shock ground offensive last August.

It was not immediately clear how much Ukraine had advanced in the region, but pro-Kremlin military bloggers reported earlier that a powerful new offensive was under way.

The assault comes at a critical juncture in the nearly three-year conflict, with both sides seeking to boost their negotiating hand ahead of US President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House on January 20.

"At about 9 am Moscow time, in order to halt the advance of Russian troops in the Kursk direction, the enemy launched a counterattack," the Russian defence ministry said.

Ukraine used two tanks, a dozen armoured vehicles and a demolition unit in the assault, which was headed towards the village of Berdin, it added.

"The operation to destroy the Ukrainian army formations continues," it said.

Pro-Kremlin military bloggers admitted the Russian army had come under pressure but said Moscow was fighting back. "The main events of the

next attempted offensive by the Ukrainian army are clearly still ahead of us," influential pro-Russian Telegram channel Rybar said.

Images purportedly showing a column of Ukrainian armoured vehicles driving through the snow were shared by pro-Russia military blogger Dva Mayora on Telegram.

Ukrainian officials gave little detail on the new offensive, with a prominent lawmaker urging silence.

"I can't understand why it is necessary to officially report on the Kursk region. Maybe better to do it afterwards when the operation is over?" Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Goncharenko said. Other officials expressed their glee at the fightback, which comes almost three years since Moscow launched its full-scale military assault on Ukraine. "Russia is getting what it deserves," Ukrainian presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak said.

The head of Ukraine's Center for Countering Disinformation, Andriy Kovalenko, said on Telegram that defence forces were "working" in the area, without elaborating. "In the Kursk region, the Russians are very worried because they were attacked from several directions, and it was a surprise for them," he said. AFP



Protesters in Seoul demanding for the arrest of its impeached president | AP

South Koreans protest in snow as Yoon arrest deadline nears

SEOUL

THOUSANDS of South Koreans braved a snowstorm Sunday to rally in support or opposition of President Yoon Suk Yeol, suspended over a failed martial law bid and resisting arrest a day before the warrant expires.

Thousands descended on his residence again Sunday despite bitter snow conditions blanketing the capital - with one camp demanding Yoon's arrest while the other called for his impeachment to be declared invalid.

"Snow is nothing for me. They can bring all the snow and we'll still be here," said anti-Yoon protester Lee Jin-ah, 28, who had previously worked at a coffee shop.

"I quit my job to come to protect our country and democracy," she said, adding that she had camped outside the residence overnight.

Park Young-chul, in his 70s, said the snowstorm wouldn't deter him from showing up to back Yoon.

"I went through war and minus 20 degrees in the snow to fight the commies. This snow is nothing. Our war is happening again," he said. AFP

Heavy snow causes disruption in UK, Germany

LONDON

HEAVY snow and freezing rain brought widespread disruption across Europe on Sunday, particularly in the UK and Germany, with several major airports forced to suspend flights

With the weather set to stay inclement on Sunday in the UK, there are concerns that many rural communities, particularly in the north of England, could be cut off, with up to 40 centimeters (15 inches) of snow on ground above 300 meters (985 feet).

The National Grid, which oversees the country's electricity network, said it had been



Snow blankets Lee Park in Liverpool, England, on Sunday | AP

working to restore power after outages across the country. The company's live map shows power cuts in Birmingham in central

England, Bristol in the west and Cardiff in Wales.

Many sporting events have already been postponed. AP

Britain's main weather forecaster, the Met Office, says sleet and snow will continue to push north on Sunday and will be heaviest in northern England and into southern Scotland.

Snow and ice were also causing havoc in Germany, where a bout of winter weather is spreading from the southwest. Authorities have issued black ice warnings for drivers and pedestrians, advising people to stay home where possible.

Frankfurt airport canceled 120 of its 1,090 planned takeoffs and landings on Sunday. At Munich airport, only one runway was open while the other one was being cleared. AP



In this videgrab, Russian servicemen attend a combat training | AP

Former French prez Sarkozy to face trial over ties to Gaddafi

PARIS

FORMER French president Nicolas Sarkozy, already convicted twice in separate cases since leaving office, on Monday goes on trial charged with accepting illegal campaign financing in an alleged pact with the late Libyan dictator Muamar Gaddafi.

Sarkozy will be in the dock at the Paris court barely half a month after France's top appeals court on December 18 rejected his appeal against a one year prison sentence for influence peddling, which he is to serve by wearing an electronic bracelet rather than in jail.

The latest trial is the result of a decade of investigations into accusations that Sarkozy accepted illegal campaign financing - reportedly amounting to some 50 million euros - from Gaddafi to help his victorious 2007 election campaign. In exchange, it is alleged, Sarkozy and senior figures pledged to help Gaddafi rehabilitate his international image after Tripoli was blamed for bombing attacks on Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988 over Lockerbie in Scotland and UTA Flight 772 in 1989 that killed hundreds of passengers.

Sarkozy has denounced the accusations as part of a conspiracy against him. AFP

WB seeks to shield Pak projects from political turmoil

ISLAMABAD

THE World Bank is set to approve a \$20 billion indicative lending package for Pakistan to protect its funded projects from political transitions and focus on six targeted areas, according to a media report.

The programme, titled

"Pakistan Country Partnership Framework 2025-35", aims to improve social indicators in the most neglected but important areas, The Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing official documents. It will focus on reducing child stunting, combating learning poverty, enhancing climate resili-

ency, decarbonising the environment, expanding fiscal space, and boosting private investment to improve productivity. These areas have broad support across the political spectrum and are expected to remain unaffected by government changes during the 2025-2035 period. PTI

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