

# Heart of Hawai‘i’s historic Lahaina, scene of deadly wildfire, reopens to residents after 4 months

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away the remaining debris and take it to a landfill after it gets permission from property owners.

Officials have said the debris would be put into dumpsters lined with impermeable plastic, then wrapped up and sealed with glue. Another layer of plastic would then cover it before it’s placed in the landfill site, which would be closed and covered with grass to look like a park.

The county plans to monitor the area for the next 30 years, the county has said. Officials plan to install groundwater wells between the landfill and the ocean to check for potential contaminant leaks.

Some Maui residents are skeptical about the plan, in part because the landfill is just 400 yards from the coast. The reef off Olowalu hosts the largest known manta ray population in the U.S. and is a primary source of coral larvae for the reefs of Lanai, Molokai, and West Maui, according to The Nature Conservancy in Hawai‘i.

“Part of our fears and part of the dangers of this is, you don’t smell it. You don’t see it. It’s an accumulative toxin,” Eddy Garcia, executive director of Regenerative Education Centers in Olowalu, said of the potential toxins in the wildfire debris.

“Every time you touch it, it goes into your face. It also seeps into the ocean. Algae will pick it up and then fish eat the algae, bigger fish eat those fish. And then we eat those fish.”

The EPA and the state’s health department have also installed 53 air monitors in Lahaina and Upcountry Maui, where a separate fire burned homes in early August. The department is urging people to avoid outdoor activity when monitor levels show elevated air pollution and to close windows and doors.

McAvoy reported from Honolulu.

## Consulting firm McKinsey agrees to \$78 million settlement with insurers over opioids

By Dee-Ann Durbin  
The Associated Press

Consulting firm McKinsey and Co. has agreed to pay \$78 million to settle claims from insurers and healthcare funds that its work with drug companies helped fuel an opioid addiction crisis.

The agreement was revealed in documents filed in federal court in San Francisco. The settlement must still be approved by a judge.

Under the agreement, McKinsey would establish a fund to reimburse insurers, private benefit plans, and others for some

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## World population up 75 million this year, standing at 8 billion on January 1

By Mike Schneider  
The Associated Press

The world population grew by 75 million people over the past year and on New Year’s Day it will stand at more than 8 billion people, according to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau. The worldwide growth rate in the past year was just under 1%. At the start of 2024, 4.3 births and two deaths are

expected worldwide every second, according to the Census Bureau figures.

The growth rate for the United States in the past year was 0.53%, about half the worldwide figure. The U.S. added 1.7 million people and will have a population on New Year’s Day of 335.8 million people.

If the current pace continues through the end of the decade, the 2020s could be the slowest-growing decade in U.S.

# Menu signed by Mao Zedong brings a quarter million dollars at auction

BOSTON (AP) — An official menu for a state banquet that bears the signature of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong has been auctioned for \$275,000.

Boston-based RR Auction said the menu was auctioned for a banquet held in Beijing on October 19, 1956, and commemorated the first state visit to China by Pakistan’s Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

The menu was signed in fountain pen by six influential Chinese statesmen, including Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai. The banquet featured foods from both nations and included delicacies such as “Consommé of Swallow Nest and White Agaric,” “Shark’s Fin in Brown Sauce,” and “Roast Peking Duck.”

“To hold a menu signed by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai is to hold a piece of the past — a piece that tells a story of diplomatic engagement, cultural exchange, and the forging of friendships that have endured through the decades,” Bobby Livingston, executive vice president at RR Auction, said in a statement.

Other items auctioned off included a fully operational World War II-era Enigma coding machine for \$206,253, a Thomas Edison-signed document for a light bulb patent for \$22,154, and a check signed by Steve Jobs to Radio Shack that sold for \$46,063.

The check, dated July 23, 1976, is payable to RadioShack for a whopping



**SPENDY SIGNATURE.** This photo provided by RR Auction shows an official menu for a state banquet signed by former Chinese leader Mao Zedong that was auctioned for \$275,000. (Photo/RR Auction)

\$4.01, and was signed by Jobs the same year he and Steve Wozniak launched Apple in a Silicon Valley garage.

At the start of 2024, the U.S. is expected to experience one birth every nine seconds and one death every 9.5 seconds. However, immigration will keep the population from dropping. Net international migration is expected to add one person to the U.S. population every 28.3 seconds. The births, deaths, and net international migration will increase the U.S. population by one person every 24.2 seconds.

## In the salt deserts bordering Pakistan, India builds its largest renewable energy project

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Khavda renewable energy park.

### An example to emulate

“Twenty years ago, India was exactly where a vast expanse of (the) developing world was,” Ajay Mathur, director general of the International Solar Alliance, said of the country’s renewable energy production. The alliance has 120 member countries and promotes renewable energy — primarily solar — across the world.

About 124 miles away in the industrial city of Mundra, also located along the Gujarat state’s coastline, the Adani Group is manufacturing the solar and wind energy parts needed for the project. It’s one of the few locations in India where most solar energy components are made from scratch. Some of the factories are run like laboratories, with protective gear, face masks, and head covers required to avoid dust particles that can compromise solar cells.

The nearby wind energy factory aims to produce 300 turbines a year, with each blade stretching nearly 86 yards and weighing 24 tons. Each wind turbine generator is capable of producing 5.2 megawatts of clean energy. They will be India’s biggest.

As Mathur of the solar alliance said, “India has travelled a long way,” and its large-scale renewable energy projects including the Khavda park will be inspiring for other developing countries. “Here is a country that was exactly where they are today and was able to make the change,” he said.

### Environmental impact

While acknowledging the importance of transitioning to renewable energy, environmental experts and social activists

say India’s decision to allow clean energy projects without any environmental impact assessments is bound to have adverse consequences.

“The salt desert is a unique landscape” that is “rich in flora and fauna,” including flamingos, desert foxes, and migratory bird species that fly from Europe and Africa to winter in this region, according to Abi T Vanak, a conservation scientist with the Bengaluru-based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment. Vanak has overseen multiple environment-related research projects in the Kutch region.

Kutch and other similar regions are classified as “wastelands,” by the Indian government — and Vanak says this is extremely unfortunate. “They are not recognized as valid ecosystems,” he said.

With renewable energy projects exempt from environmental impact assessments, “There is no system in place” to determine the best places for them, according to Sandip Virmani, an environmentalist based in Kutch.

At a little over 17,374.5 square miles, the Kutch district is as big as Denmark and is India’s largest district. Given this, Virmani said there is enough land in Kutch for various renewable energy projects. But he fears that dairies and other local businesses in the region might be impacted by large-scale projects. “It has to be in the context of not compromising on another economy,” he said.

Meanwhile, longtime residents are still waiting to see how this huge project near their village will affect them.

Hirelal Rajde, 75, who has spent most of his life in Khavda, is mindful of the upcoming energy project as well as the increase in tourism in recent years in this

otherwise desolate region. “I think these developments are both good and bad,” said Rajde.

“I think overall though it will benefit more than it will cause problems,” he said. “I tell everyone who lives here to hold onto

their land, don’t sell it. In a few years, I tell them they’ll have so much business that they won’t be able to rest even at night.”

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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## Learn the signs of stroke

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B

**BALANCE**

Did they suddenly lose balance or coordination?

E

**EYES**

Do they have sudden blurred or double vision, or loss of vision in one or both eyes?

F

**FACE**

Ask them to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

A

**ARM**

Ask them to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S

**SPEECH**

Ask them to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can they repeat the sentence correctly?

T

**TIME**

If they show any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 911