English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

This page will be updated on **Mondays***. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week

Thieves hit the Louvre again. Here's a look at other famous heists in museums worldwide

PARIS (AP) — Thieves reportedly stole nine pieces from the jewelry collection of Napoleon and the Empress in the Louvre, using a basket lift to reach the museum on Sunday morning.

The daring heist at the world's most visited museum occurred as tourists were inside the Galerie

d'Apollon, where part of the French Crown Jewels are displayed.

The museum closed for the day as police sealed gates and ushered visitors out.

Here's a look at some other famous heists worldwide:

The Louvre's missing Mona Lisa helped cement the portrait's fame

The Louvre has a long history of thefts and attempted robberies. The most famous came in 1911, when the Mona Lisa vanished from its frame, stolen by Vincenzo Peruggia, a former worker who hid inside the museum and walked out with the painting under his coat.

It was recovered two years later in Florence — an episode that helped make Leonardo da Vinci's portrait the world's best-known artwork.

Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum heist remains unsolved

It's been called the biggest art heist in U.S. history, but 35 years later, the theft of 13 works from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum remains unsolved.

In the early hours of March 18, 1990, two men disguised as Boston police officers talked their way into the museum by saying they were responding to a call. They overpowered two security guards, bound them with duct tape and spent 81 minutes pilfering 13 works of art, including masterpieces by Rembrandt, Vermeer, Degas and Manet.

Authorities say the artwork is worth perhaps as much as a half-billion dollars. Museum officials say it's priceless because it cannot be replaced.

Some of the works, including Rembrandt's "Storm on the Sea of Galilee," were cut from their frames. Those frames hang empty in the museum to this day.

2 German museum burglaries netted a solid-gold coin and royal jewels

In 2017, burglars at Berlin's Bode Museum stole a 100-kilogram (220-pound) Canadian solid-gold coin known as the "Big Maple Leaf."

The suspects are believed to have smashed a protective case and then managed to lift the coin out of a museum window before fleeing along a rail track with their haul in a wheelbarrow. After getting away with it, authorities believe they later cut up the coin, valued at about 3.75 million euros ($4.33 million), and sold the pieces.

Three men, including a museum security guard, were later convicted.

Two years later, thieves smashed vitrines in Dresden's Green Vault, one of the world's oldest museums, and carried off diamond-studded royal jewels worth hundreds of millions of euros. Officials said they made off with three "priceless" sets of 18th century jewelry that would be impossible to sell on the open market.

Part of the haul was later recovered. Five men were convicted and a sixth was acquitted.

An English palace's golden toilet was pried off its plumbing

A thief who swiped a golden toilet from an English palace was convicted earlier this year along with an accomplice who helped cash in on the spoils of the 18-carat work of art insured for nearly 5 million

pounds (more than $6 million).

Michael Jones had used the fully functioning one-of-a-kind latrine as he did reconnaissance at Blenheim Palace — the country mansion where British wartime leader Winston Churchill was born — the day before the theft, prosecutors said. He described the experience as "splendid."

He returned before dawn on Sept. 14, 2019, with at least two other men armed with sledgehammers and crowbars. They smashed a window and pried the toilet from its plumbing within five minutes, leaving a damaging flood in their wake as they escaped in stolen vehicles.

The satirical work, titled "America" by Italian conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan, poked fun at excessive wealth. It weighed just over 215 pounds (98 kilograms). The value of the gold at the time was 2.8 million ($3.6 million). The purloined potty has never been recovered but is believed to have been cut up and sold.

The piece had previously been on display at The Guggenheim Museum in New York. The museum had offered the work to U.S. President Donald Trump during his first term in office after he had asked to borrow a Van Gogh painting.

US electric grids under pressure from energy-hungry data centers are changing strategy

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — With the explosive growth of Big Tech's data centers threatening to overload U.S. electricity grids, policymakers are taking a hard look at a tough-love solution: bumping the energy-hungry data centers off grids during power emergencies.

Texas moved first, as state lawmakers try to protect residents in the data-center hotspot from another deadly blackout, like the winter storm in 2021 when dozens died.

Now the concept is emerging in the 13-state mid-Atlantic grid and elsewhere as massive data centers are coming online faster than power plants can be built and connected to grids. That has elicited pushback from data centers and Big Tech, for whom a steady power supply is vital.

Like many other states, Texas wants to attract data centers as an economic boon, but it faces the challenge of meeting the huge volumes of electricity the centers demand. Lawmakers there passed a

bill in June that, among other things, orders up standards for power emergencies when utilities must disconnect big electric users.

That, in theory, would save enough electricity to avoid a broad blackout on the handful of days during the year when it is hottest or coldest and power consumption pushes grids to their limits or beyond.

Texas was first, but it won't be the last, analysts say, now that the late 2022 debut of OpenAI's ChatGPT ignited worldwide demand for chatbots and other generative AI products that typically require large amounts of computing power to train and operate.

"We're going to see that kind of thing pop up everywhere," said Michael Webber, a University of Texas engineering professor who specializes in energy. "Data center flexibility will be expected, required, encouraged, mandated, whatever it is."

Data centers are threatening grids

That's because grids can't keep up with the fast-growing number of data center projects unfolding in Texas and perhaps 20 other states as the U.S. competes in a race against China for artificial intelligence superiority.

Grid operators in Texas, the Great Plains states and the mid-Atlantic region have produced eye-popping projections showing that electricity demand in the coming years will spike, largely due to data centers.

A proposal similar to Texas' has emerged from the nation's biggest grid operator, PJM Interconnection, which runs the mid-Atlantic grid that serves 65 million people and data-center hotspots in Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The CEO of the Southwest Power Pool, which operates the grid that serves 18 million people primarily in Kansas, Oklahoma and other Great Plains states, said it has no choice but to expand power-reduction programs — likely for the biggest power users — to meet growing demand.

The proposals are cropping up at a time when electricity bills nationally are rising fast — twice the rate of inflation, according to federal data — and growing evidence suggests that the bills of some regular Americans are rising to subsidize the gargantuan energy needs of Big Tech.

Analysts say power plant construction cannot keep up with the growth of data center demand, and that something must change.

"Data center load has the potential to overwhelm the grid, and I think it is on its way to doing that," said Joe Bowring, who heads Monitoring Analytics, the independent market watchdog in the mid-Atlantic grid.

Data centers might have to adjust

Big Tech is trying to make their data centers more energy efficient. They are also installing backup generators, typically fueled by diesel, to ensure an uninterrupted power supply if there's a power outage.

Data center operators, however, say they hadn't anticipated needing that backup power supply to help grid operators meet demand and are closely watching how utility regulators in Texas write the regulations.

The Data Center Coalition, which represents Big Tech companies and data center developers, wants the standards to be flexible, since some data centers may not be able to switch to backup power as easily or as quickly as others.

The grid operator also should balance that system with financial rewards for data centers that voluntarily shut down during emergencies, said Dan Diorio of the Data Center Coalition.

Nation's largest grid operator has a proposal

PJM's just-released proposal revolves around a concept in which proposed data centers may not be guaranteed to receive electricity during a power emergency.

That's caused a stir among power plant owners and the tech industry.

Many questioned PJM's legal authority to enforce it or warned of destabilizing energy markets and states scaring off investors and developers with uncertainty and risk.

"This is particularly concerning given that states within PJM's footprint actively compete with other U.S. regions for data center and digital infrastructure investment," the Digital Power Network, a group of Bitcoin miners and data center developers, said in written comments to PJM.

The governors of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois and Maryland said they worried that it's too unpredictable to provide a permanent solution and that it should at least be accompanied by incentives for data centers to build new power sources and voluntarily reduce electricity use.

Others, including consumer advocates, warned that it won't lower electric bills and that PJM should instead pursue a "bring your own generation" requirement for data centers to, in essence, build their own power source.

A deal is shrouded in secrecy

In Indiana, Google took a voluntary route.

Last month, the electric utility, Indiana & Michigan Power, and the tech giant filed a power-supply contract with Indiana regulators for a proposed $2 billion data center planned in Fort Wayne in which Google agreed to reduce electricity use there when the grid is stressed. The data center would, it said, reduce electricity use by delaying non-urgent tasks to when the electric grid is under less stress.

However, important details are being kept from the public and Ben Inskeep of the Citizens Action Coalition, a consumer advocacy group, said that leaves it unclear how valuable the arrangement really is, if at all.

A new way of thinking about electricity

To an extent, bumping big users off the grid during high-demand periods presents a new approach to electricity.

It could save money for regular ratepayers, since power is most expensive during peak usage periods.

Abe Silverman, an energy researcher at Johns Hopkins University, said that data centers can and do use all the electricity they want on most days.

But taking data centers off the grid for those handful of hours during the most extreme heat or cold would mean not having to spend billions of dollars to build a bunch of power plants, he said.

"And the question is, is that worth it? Is it worth it for society to build those 10 new power plants just to serve the data centers for five hours a year?" Silverman said. "Or is there a better way to do it?"

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