

Shorts (right)

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Moods on Twitter follow biological rhythms, study finds

However grumpy when they wake up, and whether they stumble to their feet in Mumbai, Mexico City or Minnetonka, Minn., people tend to brighten by breakfast time and feel their mood taper gradually to a low in the late afternoon, before rallying again near bedtime, a large-scale study of posts on the social media site Twitter found.

Drawing on messages posted by more than 2 million people in 84 countries, researchers discovered that the emotional tone of people's messages follows a similar pattern not only through the day but also through the week and the changing seasons.

The new analysis suggests our moods are driven in part by a shared underlying biological rhythm that transcends culture and environment.

Outside researchers cautioned that drawing on Twitter has its hazards, like any other attempt to monitor the fleeting internal states labeled as moods. For starters, Twitter users are computer-savvy, skew young and affluent, and post for a variety of reasons.

—Benedict Carey, *The New York Times*

Washington, seeking revenue, is in a mood to sell

WASHINGTON — Like Americans trying to raise quick cash by unloading their unwanted goods, the federal government is considering a novel way to reduce the deficit: holding the equivalent of a garage sale.

Deep within President Barack Obama's proposals to raise revenue and reduce the deficit lies a method that has garnered bipartisan support, something rare in Washington these days. It involves selling an island, courthouses, maybe an airstrip, generally idle or underused vehicles, roads, buildings, land — even the airwaves used to broadcast television.

Many conservatives — including Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, chairman of the House Budget Committee, and the budget experts at the Cato Institute — support the broad idea of shrinking the government by selling parts of it. Democrats like the idea of virtually painless revenue-raising. Whether Congress can pass any bill in the current atmosphere, however, is far from certain.

—Edward Wyatt, *The New York Times*

A European crisis that could be measured in years

It has happened time and again in recent months as Europe's debt crisis has played out. Stocks stage a remarkably strong comeback on expectations that a solution has been found. Then they quickly resume their decline as hopes dissipate, leaving investors puzzled and frazzled.

The problem, say close watchers of both the subprime financial crisis in 2008 and the European government debt crisis today, is that many investors think there is a quick and easy fix, if only

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government officials can come to an agreement and act decisively.

In reality, one might not exist. A best case in Europe is a bailout of troubled governments and their banks that keeps the financial system from experiencing a major shock and sending economies worldwide into recession.

But a bailout doesn't mean wiping out the huge debts that have taken years to accumulate. Too much debt could take many years to ease.

—*Graham Bowley and Liz Alderman, The New York Times*

US asks Supreme Court to rule on health care

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration asked the Supreme Court on Wednesday to hear a case concerning the 2010 health care overhaul law. The development, which came unexpectedly fast, makes it all but certain that the court will soon agree to hear one or more cases involving challenges to the law, with arguments by the spring and a decision by June, in time to land in the middle of the 2012 presidential campaign.

The Justice Department said the justices should hear its appeal of a decision by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, in Atlanta, that struck down the centerpiece of the law by a 2-1 vote.

“The department has consistently and successfully defended this law in several courts of appeals, and only the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled it unconstitutional,” the Justice Department said in a statement. “We believe the question is appropriate for review by the Supreme Court.”

The administration did not explain why it did not take routine litigation steps that might have slowed the progress of the challenges enough to avoid a decision in the current Supreme Court term. It did say in its brief that the 11th Circuit's decision striking down the central piece of a comprehensive regulatory scheme created “a matter of grave national importance.”

—*Adam Liptak, The New York Times*

US envoy to Syria trapped for a time by pro-Assad crowd

BEIRUT — Dozens of pro-government Syrians attempted to assault a U.S. diplomatic delegation that included the ambassador on Thursday, striking its motorcade as it traveled to a meeting with an opposition figure in Damascus and then trying to break into an office where the meeting was held, essentially trapping the participants inside for 90 minutes.

The United States protested the episode and suggested that the attackers had been deliberately allowed to harass the diplomatic delegation by Syrian security forces, who arrived belatedly to provide safe passage for the Americans to leave. The ambassador, Robert S. Ford, an outspoken critic of Syria's President, Bashar Assad, was reported safe but some vehicles in his motorcade were damaged.

—*Nada Bakri, The New York Times*

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