



Speaker Mike Johnson on Friday was able to avoid the humiliating multiday slog of failed votes that his predecessor had endured.

BIDEN BLOCKS BID
TO BUY U.S. STEEL

Calls Nippon Sale Threat
to National Security

By ALAN RAPPEPORT
WASHINGTON — President Biden blocked the \$14 billion takeover of U.S. Steel by Nippon Steel of Japan in an announcement on Friday based on grounds that the sale posed a threat to national security.

The decision was an extraordinary use of executive power, particularly for a president who is just weeks from leaving office. It is also a departure from America’s long-established culture of open investment, one that could have wide-ranging implications for the U.S. economy. Although the politics of the move were clear, Mr. Biden emphasized that he was acting to protect national security.

“It is my solemn responsibility as president to ensure that, now and long into the future, America has a strong domestically owned and operated steel industry that can continue to power our national sources of strength at home and abroad,” Mr. Biden said in a statement Friday. “And it is a fulfillment of that responsibility to block foreign ownership of this vital American company.”

Mr. Biden’s move to stop the transaction could cause foreign investors to rethink the wisdom of acquiring American firms in sensitive industries that are based in politically important states. It could also roil relations with Japan, a close ally of the United States and one of America’s largest sources of foreign investment.

The president’s decision to block the deal came after a federal committee reviewing the transaction opted to not make a formal recommendation about whether the takeover should be allowed to proceed, according to letters sent to the companies and the White House last month.

The Committee of Foreign Investment in the United States, which is made up of agencies including the departments of Treasury and Justice, expressed reservations about the deal to the companies in a letter last month.

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NO CHANGE Experts say that Japanese companies will continue to seek out U.S. deals. PAGE B1

A New York Judge Upholds Trump’s Conviction

By BEN PROTESS
and KATE CHRISTOBEK

A New York judge on Friday upheld President-elect Donald J. Trump’s felony conviction but signaled that he was inclined to spare him any punishment, a striking development in a case that had spotlighted an array of criminal acts and imperiled the former and future president’s freedom.

The judge, Juan M. Merchan, indicated that he favored a so-called unconditional discharge of Mr. Trump’s sentence, a rare and lenient alternative to jail or probation. He set a sentencing date of Jan. 10, and ordered Mr. Trump to appear in person or virtually.

Signals President-Elect
Would Not Serve
Any Jail Time

An unconditional discharge would cement Mr. Trump’s status as a felon just weeks before his inauguration — he would be the first to carry that dubious designation into the presidency — even as it would water down the consequences for his crimes.

Unlike a conditional discharge, which allows defendants to walk free if they meet certain requirements, such as maintaining employment or paying restitution, an unconditional discharge would come without strings attached.

That sentence, Justice Merchan wrote in an 18-page decision, “appears to be the most viable solution to ensure finality and allow defendant to pursue his appellate options.”

Mr. Trump, who could ask an appeals court to intervene and postpone the sentencing, was facing up to four years in prison. A Manhattan jury convicted him in May on 34 counts of falsifying business records, concluding that he had sought to cover up a sex scandal that threatened to derail his 2016 campaign for president.

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Shaymaa Shady, right, is in Bologna, Italy, for treatment after she lost a leg in a Gaza bombing.

An Unfamiliar Life for Wounded Gazan Children

By LAURA BOUSHNAK
and ALAN YUHAS

Italian summer camp kids peppered Shaymaa Shady, 6, with questions about how she lost her leg. “Ha fatto la guerra,” one child said. She went to war.

She and 15 other children evacuated from Gaza months ago, urgently needing medical care. Sarah Yusuf, her pelvis broken in an Israeli strike, can now play without limping.

Ahmad al-Saafen, 4, is still

In Italy, Facing Future
While Missing Home

learning to use his new leg, a replacement for one he lost under Israeli bombardment over a year ago.

Baian Azoum was pulled from Gaza’s rubble in critical condition. She faces nearly two years of treatment ahead, only 4 years old in an unfamiliar land.

The children and their caretakers know little of the language or the culture. They know even less of what may happen to them or their loved ones in the months to come.

They do know war.

Sixteen young people, all but one younger than 15, were evacuated from the Gaza Strip early this year after sustaining dire injuries in the war there between Israel and Hamas. The airlifts were the result of painstaking negotiations

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JOHNSON SAVES JOB
AS HOUSE SPEAKER,
QUELLING REVOLT

With Help From Trump, He Persuades
Holdouts on the Right to Relent

By CATIE EDMONDSON

WASHINGTON — Speaker Mike Johnson won re-election on Friday to the top post in the House, salvaging his job in a dramatic last-minute turnabout by putting down a revolt from conservatives who initially voted to block his ascent.

Mr. Johnson barely mustered the majority he needed to win reelection on the first ballot, with help from President-elect Donald J. Trump, who interrupted a golf game to lobby holdouts by phone. That allowed the speaker to avoid the humiliation of a multiday slog of failed votes like the one his predecessor Kevin McCarthy suffered through before ultraconservatives relented and elected him two years ago.

Mr. Johnson won with just enough votes to clinch the gavel, 218 to 215.

But the chaotic scene that played out on the House floor — with three Republicans initially opposing Mr. Johnson and six more abstaining until it appeared he would lose before voting for him — reflected the same divisions within G.O.P. ranks that had plagued Mr. McCarthy.

It was a grim portent for Mr. Johnson at the start of the new all-Republican Congress, and for Mr. Trump as he embarks upon his second term with an ambitious and crowded agenda that will require his party to stay almost entirely unified.

Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Trump had urged Republican lawmakers to quickly elect Mr. Johnson speaker so the House could start work on the president-elect’s legislative priorities. But it became clear early into the vote on Friday that some of the hard-liners who had vented dissatisfaction with Mr. Johnson’s perform-

ance in the top post were intent on dealing him an embarrassing rebuke before allowing him to keep his job.

As their names were called by the House clerk, instead of voting, they stared defiantly ahead and remained silent.

By the time three other Republicans — Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Keith Self of Texas and Ralph Norman of South Carolina — voted for lawmakers other than Mr. Johnson, it appeared that he was at risk of losing the gavel to Representative Ha-keem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic leader.

But eventually, the six lawmakers who had initially withheld their votes changed them to support Mr. Johnson, a Louisiana Republican.

With three defectors, he was still short of the majority necessary to win re-election.

Mr. Johnson then huddled with two of the holdouts — first in the center aisle of the House floor, and then in an adjacent room — as the vote was held open for nearly an hour.

They returned together to the floor, and Mr. Self and Mr. Norman strode to the center of the chamber and changed their votes with Mr. Johnson looking on, handing him the support necessary to win another term as Republicans stood and applauded.

Mr. Self said in an interview that he changed his vote after Mr. Johnson agreed to include more members of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus in negotiations

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NEW G.O.P. LEADER Senator John Thune will face a challenge in the president-elect. PAGE A11

Bouncing Back
Is a Part of Life
In New Orleans

By RICK ROJAS
and CAMPBELL ROBERTSON

NEW ORLEANS — As the old year ticked off its last minutes, New Orleans seemed ready for the new one.

The city had gone through a rough stretch, but things were looking up. The gun violence that surged to harrowing levels during the pandemic had fallen off dramatically. The Super Bowl, returning to New Orleans in February after a dozen years, promised an influx of visitors and excitement. And the city’s best season, the exuberant weeks leading up to Mardi Gras, was on its way.

But less than four hours into the new year, a heavily armed man slammed a truck into the celebrating crowds, leaving dozens wounded or dead on the city’s most carefree street.

In the news conferences that followed, the mayor of New Orleans and other leaders in Louisiana praised the city’s residents for their resilience amid disaster. It’s a message they had heard before.

“The word ‘resilient’ has become synonymous with the city of New Orleans,” Lesli Harris, a city councilwoman, said in an interview, acknowledging that the quality was a source of both pride and exasperation. “We are resilient because we have to be.”

Many people in New Orleans have expressed a certain comfort

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A Call to Note
Risks of Cancer
On U.S. Alcohol

By RONI CARYN RABIN

Alcohol is a leading preventable cause of cancer, and alcoholic beverages should carry a warning label as packs of cigarettes do, the U.S. surgeon general said on Friday.

It is the latest salvo in a fierce debate about the risks and benefits of moderate drinking as the influential U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans are about to be updated. For decades, moderate drinking was said to help prevent heart attacks and strokes.

That perception has been embedded in the dietary advice given to Americans. But growing research has linked drinking, sometimes even within the recommended limits, to various types of cancer.

Labels affixed to bottles and cans of alcoholic beverages warn about drinking while pregnant or before driving and operating other machinery, and about general “health risks.”

But alcohol directly contributes to 100,000 cancer cases and 20,000 related deaths each year, the surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, said.

He called for updating the labels to include a heightened risk of breast cancer, colon cancer and at least five other malignancies now linked by scientific studies to alcohol consumption.

“Many people out there assume

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