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DAVID GUTTENFELDER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

## In Syria, a Celebration a Year in the Works

Gathering on Monday to mark a year since the fall of President Bashar al-Assad. But challenges remain for the new leaders. Page A8.

## In Cease-Fire, Hamas Revives A Grip on Gaza

By ADAM RASGON

JERUSALEM — Since Israeli forces withdrew from parts of Gaza in October under a cease-fire agreement, Hamas has moved quickly to fill the void.

Its police forces are out on the streets again. Its fighters have executed opponents. And its officials have levied fees on some costly goods being imported into Gaza, according to local businessmen.

Over two years of war, top Hamas commanders and thousands of fighters have been killed, and the group's arsenal has been severely depleted. It now controls less than half of the territory in Gaza, with the rest occupied by Israel.

Yet Hamas has managed to reassert its power in Gaza, according to Israeli security officials and an Arab intelligence official. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal assessments.

"Hamas was hit hard, but it wasn't defeated," said Shalom Ben Hanan, a former senior official in the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency. "It's still standing."

This swift regrouping presents a formidable obstacle to the Trump administration's plan to reconstruct a Gaza free of Hamas. The plan envisions the enclave's demilitarization and calls for all military infrastructure, including tunnels and weapons production facilities, to be destroyed.

Hamas emerged from the war with a foundation it can build on.

Mr. Ben Hanan, who receives briefings from the Shin Bet leadership, said that even though Hamas's ranks are thinned, official estimates say that 20,000 fighters remain.

Hamas has quickly replaced the commanders killed in the war, said Brig. Gen. Erez Winner, who served in a senior role in the Israeli military until March.

The group has many places to hide and store weapons, given that more than half of the underground tunnel network is still intact, the Israeli and Arab officials said.

Hamas still runs the central organs of government in Gaza, including the security services, Mr. Ben Hanan said. Its rocket supply has dwindled, but members still have lighter weapons, like automatic rifles, rocket-propelled

*Continued on Page A8*

## Building Chip Plant Takes an Ocean of Approvals

By PETER S. GOODMAN

PHOENIX — The computer chip factories rising from an empty expanse of the Sonoran Desert test the concept of immensity. The complex is under construction across 1,149 acres, an area larger than New York's Central Park. It represents an investment of \$165 billion, making it one of the most expensive undertakings on earth.

Here on the northern edges of Phoenix stands a display of the American reach for industrial self-sufficiency. The factories are engineered to make advanced computer chips — the brains of mod-

### AMERICAN INERTIA

*Unintended Costs of Regulation*

ern manufacturing. Those chips will power data centers that deliver artificial intelligence.

American political leaders celebrate the presence of the plants as insurance against geopolitical turmoil and disasters like pandemics. Whatever happens, the nation will have its own supply of computer chips.

But the company at the center of this enterprise — one cast as vital to national security — is not American. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, or

TSMC, the global leader in the industry, has marshaled the investment, the people and the know-how to turn these plans into reality.

Scores of other companies, some of them American but many from East Asia, have set up their own local factories to supply TSMC with everything it needs, from chemicals and components to construction and engineering services. Collectively, they have invested an additional \$40 billion in the local economy.

This is the inescapable truth behind the transformation of Phoenix into a hub for computer

*Continued on Page A12*



KENTARO TAKAHASHI/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Miniature schnauzers during the 7-5-3 holiday in Japan, where (human) births are on the decline.

## Blessings for Children Clad in Kimonos, and Fur

By JAVIER C. HERNÁNDEZ  
and HISAKO UENO

TOKYO — The worshippers, dressed in kimonos and bespoke belts, took their places inside a sacred Shinto shrine. One by one, they received blessings from a priest and listened obediently to ancient chants. Then they began to bark.

It was a Friday morning at the Ichigaya Kamegaoka shrine in Tokyo, and a parade of poodles, Pomeranians, Chihuahuas and

### Japan Remakes Festival as Pet Market Booms

bichons frisé — with names like Latte, Chip and Potapotayaki — was celebrating a children's festival known as Shichi-Go-San, or 7-5-3, alongside their owners.

"Be joyful with your owners," the shrine's chief priest, Kenji Kaji, said at the ceremony. "Every day and for a long time to come."

For centuries, 7-5-3, which in modern times is celebrated throughout the fall, has been a rite of passage for Japanese children reaching the ages of 7, 5 and 3, considered milestones in Japan. Now the festival is getting a pet-friendly revamp, with dozens of shrines offering blessings for four-legged companions, and owners splurging on wigs, amulets and tailor-made jackets.

The popularity of 7-5-3 reflects Japan's booming pet industry; the

*Continued on Page A6*

## BUSINESS B1-5

### Energy Storage on the Rise

An early grid battery was installed in a Chilean desert 15 years ago. Now the batteries are everywhere.

PAGE B1

### China's Currency Draws Critics

The renminbi is so weak it is making Chinese goods and services cheap and helping to drive exports.

PAGE B1



*Continued on Page A8*

## INTERNATIONAL A4-9

### Unlikely Russian Spy Suspect

Poland has charged a little-known opposition figure with espionage and participating in a bomb plot. His friends are perplexed.

PAGE A9

### Suffocating in New Delhi

With little being done to clean the skies, the city struggles with air called "life-threatening" by some experts.

PAGE A7

## OBITUARIES A21, 24

### An Extreme Clothes Designer

Pam Hogg, 74, was a star of London's post-punk fashion scene, and dressed a generation of rock stars.

PAGE A21



## ARTS C1-6

### Golden Globes List Released

Warner Bros. earned 16 nominations, including six for "The White Lotus," above, an HBO show it owns.

PAGE C1

### An Art Basel Superfecta

Our critic took the four-season journey to the premium art fair in Hong Kong, Basel, Paris and Miami Beach.

PAGE C1

## NATIONAL A10-20

### Bondi's Words on Illegal Orders

Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote last year, as a lawyer for a conservative think tank, that service members who followed unlawful orders were committing crimes.

PAGE A11

### When Not All Cancers Harm

Statistics show a clear spike in eight cancers in people under 50 in the U.S., but that has brought a debate over whether detecting every case is necessarily a good thing.

PAGE A20

## OPINION A22-23

### Frank Bruni

PAGE A22



## SCIENCE TIMES D1-8

### The Easter Island Parade

Scholars have long debated just how the massive stone figures of Rapa Nui got to where they are. A new study offers a surprising theory.

PAGE D1



## THE WEATHER

Today, some sun, turning cloudy, still cold, high 36. Tonight, cloudy, not as cold, low 34. Tomorrow, cloudy, breezy, afternoon rain, high 43. Weather map is on Page B10.

## POWER TO FIRE LIKELY TO GROW FOR PRESIDENCY

### A High Mark Globally, Despite U.S. Tariffs

By KEITH BRADSHER

BEIJING — China got the world's attention last January when it announced that its trade surplus for goods and services had hit almost \$1 trillion, an excess of exports to imports that no country had ever reached.

Now China has surged through that milestone in just 11 months this year. China's customs agency announced on Monday that the country's accumulated trade surplus reached \$1.08 trillion through November.

Tariffs imposed by President Trump on China have caused Chinese exports to the United States to drop by nearly a fifth. But China has throttled back its purchases of American soybeans and other products by almost the same rate, continuing to sell three times as much to the United States as it buys.

China's \$111.68 billion trade surplus in November was its third-largest ever in a single month. The overall surplus through the first 11 months of the year was up 21.7 percent from the same period last year.

China has ramped up considerably its sales to other countries. From cars to solar panels to consumer electronics, a tsunami of Chinese exports is flooding Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America.

Carmakers and other exporters in traditional manufacturing powerhouses like Germany, Japan and South Korea are losing customers to Chinese rivals. Factories in developing countries like Indonesia and South Africa have had to curtail production or even close as they've struggled to match China's low prices.

Chinese companies have shifted final assembly of their goods to Southeast Asia, Mexico and Africa, which then ship finished products to the United States. This has allowed them to partly bypass Mr. Trump's tariffs on goods coming straight from China.

China now sells more than twice as much to the European Union as it buys. China's trade surplus with the region has widened considerably this year.

One major reason is that China's currency has been weak over the last several years against many other currencies, particularly the euro. Another is that prices have been falling in China, while they have been rising in the United States and Europe.

The weakness of the Chinese currency, the renminbi, has

*Continued on Page A5*

By ANN E. MARIMOW

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday appeared poised to make it easier for President Trump to fire independent government officials despite laws meant to insulate them from political pressure in what would be a major expansion of presidential power.

Hearing a case dealing with Mr. Trump's attempt to oust a member of the Federal Trade Commission, the court's conservative majority seemed ready to overturn or strictly limit a landmark decision from 1935. That precedent said Congress could constrain the president's authority to remove some executive branch officials.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., who is almost always in the majority in significant cases, said the F.T.C. shielded by that opinion 90 years ago looked nothing like the modern commission. Over time, he said, the commission has come to exercise significantly more executive power, an authority the Constitution generally reserves for the president. He referred to the 1935 precedent as "just a dried husk of whatever people used to think it was."

Even as they appeared receptive to the Trump administration's maximalist position, several key justices seemed intent on making sure the court's eventual ruling in the case did not threaten the independence of the Federal Reserve. In January, they will hear a separate case dealing with Mr. Trump's attempt to fire a Fed governor.

The court's three liberal justices warned of the far-reaching consequences for the structure of the modern government if the majority

*Continued on Page A17*

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