



ISADORA KOSOFSKY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Los Angeles Wildfires Stole Their Rainbow

Ten children who lost their homes, schools and neighborhoods share how they’ve been feeling and what’s cheering them up. Page A11.

Minimal Resistance From West
As Rwanda Makes Land Grab

By RUTH MACLEAN

DAKAR, Senegal — After Rwanda-backed rebels seized the Congolese city of Goma in 2012, powerful nations across the world registered their disapproval, announcing sanctions against Rwanda and other measures that led to the rebels’ defeat a year later. When those same rebels battled to capture Goma on Sunday, several nations once again voiced their criticism, but they have yet to apply the level of pressure on Rwanda that eventually led the rebels to stand down more than a decade ago. As hundreds of thousands of civilians fled escalating violence in recent days, seeking sanctuary in Goma, the rebel group M23 was right behind them. M23, which the United Nations

and others say is funded and armed by Rwanda, declared that it had captured Goma early on Monday. Now, with the fate of the city in the balance, analysts say a conflict that could be tamed with strong international pressure against Rwanda is, instead, spiraling out of control. Rwanda has as many as 4,000 troops in eastern Congo supporting the M23 advance, United Nations experts say. The government of Paul Kagame, Rwanda’s president, appears intent on rewriting Congo’s map by seizing land, and so far, beyond issuing reproofs, Western countries have barely mustered a response. Mr. Kagame has denied that Rwanda is arming M23, or that his troops are in the Democratic

Continued on Page A8

Doubts Over F.B.I. Independence
Stoked by Fealty of Trump’s Pick

By GLENN THRUSH and ADAM GOLDMAN

WASHINGTON — Kash Patel spent years ingratiating himself with Donald J. Trump — regularly popping into the Oval Office in the first term, writing a children’s book starring “King Donald” during the interregnum, trailing him to rallies, banquets and bus tours on the bumpy ride back to power. Few practitioners of the audience-of-one strategy have been quite so successful at translating loyalty and proximity to Mr. Trump into real influence. Fewer still are poised to be rewarded as significantly as Mr. Patel, 44, Mr. Trump’s pick to run the F.B.I., an agency with vast powers that he has vowed to radically overhaul. What binds Mr. Trump and Mr. Patel is the shared conviction that the bureau has been weaponized against conservatives, including both of them. They argue it is po-

liticized and the only way to fix it is to empower an outsider willing to faithfully execute the Trump agenda — a sharp divergence from the bureau’s historical norms and the decades-long practice of directors’ limiting contact with presidents. The issue of Mr. Patel’s independence, or lack thereof, will be a flashpoint at a confirmation hearing scheduled for Thursday. Mr. Patel’s embrace of Jan. 6 conspiracy theories and unflinching fealty are the coin of the realm in Mr. Trump’s orbit. But in the view of his many critics (and even some who publicly sing his

Continued on Page A12

WATCHDOGS’ OUSTER The scope of the firings of inspectors general has raised alarms. PAGE A14

After Silence in Past Wars, Kremlin Is Elevating Veterans’ Status

By VALERIE HOPKINS and ALINA LOBZINA

MOSCOW — When Ilya Rusinov returned to the Russian work force after rehabilitating a vertebra damaged in the Ukraine war, his first job was teaching in a school. But he had also launched a side project, a patriotic club he called Zveno, or “Squad,” that provides military training for different age groups, including teenagers. After struggling at first, it found growing demand for its training sessions, including from instructors at similar patriotic organizations. Mr. Rusinov eventually left his teaching job to help run Zveno full time. Almost three years after a mortar shell blew a hole in his back, Mr. Rusinov, who fought as part of the Wagner mercenary group, is one of a growing group of veterans whom Russian officials claim are being rewarded with an enhanced standing in society — speaking at public events, school lectures and with local news outlets. It is part of the Kremlin’s very public effort to elevate veterans to leadership positions, offering business opportunities and some forgiveness on loans, all while priming society to accept and appreciate them.



NANNA HEITMANN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Veterans back from Ukraine. Moscow’s public effort is now promoting them to leadership roles.

Today, veterans address school groups as young as kindergarten age and give basic weapons training to students, which since September is a mandatory part of every curriculum starting in eighth grade. Billboards proclaiming the

heroism of soldiers line major roads, and the Kremlin has made a show of appointing veterans to top jobs. An hourlong daytime TV show on state-owned Rossiya 1 called “Ours” features breathless cover-

age of veterans. Some give live performances of frontline ballads, others tell of their “heroism” on the front. To be sure, veterans’ re-entry into society can be rocky. A lingering

Continued on Page A6

Trump Threats
Promise Tariffs
For Any Cause

His Strategy Has Little
to Do With Trade

By ANA SWANSON and ALAN RAPPEPORT

WASHINGTON — In his first week in office, President Trump tried to browbeat governments across the world into ending the flow of drugs into America, accepting planes full of deported migrants, halting wars and ceding territory to the United States. For all of them, he deployed a common threat: Countries that did not meet his demands would face stiff tariffs on products they send to American consumers. Mr. Trump has long wielded tariffs as a weapon to resolve trade concerns. But the president is now frequently using them to make gains on issues that have little to do with trade. It is a strategy rarely seen from other presidents, and never at this frequency. While Mr. Trump threatened governments like Mexico’s with tariffs over immigration issues in his first term, he now appears to be making such threats almost daily, including on Sunday, when he said Colombia would face tariffs after its government turned back planes carrying deported immigrants. “The willingness rhetorically to throw the kitchen sink and use the whole tool kit is trying to send the message to other countries beyond Colombia that they should comply and find ways to address these border concerns,” said Rachel Ziemba, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Last week, Mr. Trump threatened to put a 25 percent tariff on products from Canada and Mexico and a 10 percent tariff on Chinese products on Feb. 1 unless those countries did more to stop the flows of drugs and migrants into the United States. Previously, he threatened to punish Denmark with tariffs if its government would not cede Greenland to the United States and to impose levies on Russia if it would not end its war in Ukraine. On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Trump wrote on social media that he would impose 25 percent tariffs on Colombia and raise them to 50 percent in one week. Within a few hours, the Colombian president, Gustavo Petro, said he would hit back with his own tariffs. But by Sunday night, the White House had released a statement saying that Mr. Petro had agreed to all of its terms, and that Mr. Trump would hold the threat of tariffs and sanctions “in reserve.” That quick resolution may only further embolden Mr. Trump’s use of tariffs to extract concessions

Continued on Page A5

MEDICAID ALARM
PROMPTS JUDGE
TO BLOCK FREEZE

AID CUTOFF IS PAUSED

President’s Order Causes
Fear and Confusion
— 22 States Sue

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s order to freeze trillions of dollars in federal grants and loans led to confusion and outrage on Tuesday as it interrupted the Medicaid system that provides health care to millions of low-income Americans and other programs that depend on the flow of federal money. Late Tuesday afternoon, a federal judge in the District of Columbia temporarily blocked the order in response to a lawsuit filed by Democracy Forward, a liberal organization that argued that the directive violated the First Amendment and a law governing how executive orders are to be rolled out. The judge, Loren AliKhan, said she would issue a more permanent decision on Feb. 3. Shortly after, attorneys general in 22 states and the District of Columbia also filed a lawsuit against the order, which came late Monday night. The attorneys general — all Democrats — said Mr.



Karoline Leavitt, the press secretary, played down concerns.

Trump had gone far beyond his legal powers when he moved to “pause” trillions of dollars in funding already allocated by Congress. “What a ham-handed way to run the government,” said Rhode Island’s attorney general, Peter Neronha, when the lawsuit was announced. But Mr. Trump’s plan to purge the government of what he calls a “woke” ideology already had upended the work of federal agencies and groups that receive federal funding from the government. Federal health researchers, nonprofits and programs for early childhood education reported that

Continued on Page A15

China’s Bargain Basement A.I.
Upends Silicon Valley Dogma

SAN FRANCISCO — The artificial intelligence breakthrough that is sending shock waves through stock markets, spooking Silicon Valley giants and generating breathless takes about the end of America’s technological dominance arrived with an unassuming, wonky title: “Incentivizing Reasoning Capability in LLMs via Reinforcement Learning.” The 22-page paper, released last week by a scrappy Chinese A.I. start-up called DeepSeek, didn’t immediately set off alarm bells. It took a few days for researchers to digest the paper’s claims, and the implications of what it described. The company had created a new A.I. model

called DeepSeek-R1, built by a team of researchers who claimed to have used a modest number of second-rate A.I. chips to match the performance of leading American A.I. models at a fraction of the cost. DeepSeek said it had done this by using clever engineering to substitute for raw computing horsepower. And it had done it in China, a country many experts thought was in a distant second place in the global A.I. race. Some industry watchers initially reacted to DeepSeek’s breakthrough with disbelief. Surely, they thought, DeepSeek

Continued on Page A20

DEEPSEEK’S RISE How a Chinese start-up went from being a stock trader to an A.I. star. PAGE B1



INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Taming Vietnam’s Traffic

Steep new fines — more than many people make in a month — have made the streets less freewheeling. PAGE A4

Clearing Lebanon’s War Debris

The Israel-Hezbollah war has left behind lots of rubble. Some fear it will be dumped into the environment. PAGE A7

NATIONAL A11-20

A Deadly Virus in Samoa

A governor blames Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President Trump’s pick for health policy chief, over a measles outbreak that killed 83 people. PAGE A17

Increasing Life Expectancy

New York City officials proposed a plan to reduce deaths from cancer and heart- and diabetes-related ailments. PAGE A20

BUSINESS B1-6

The Fed May Pause Rate Cuts

With a solid economy and mounting inflation concerns, the U.S. central bank says it will “move cautiously.” PAGE B1



SPORTS B7-10, 12

Color Me Fierce

The goalie mask is a rare canvas for individuality in the world of uniformed professional sports. PAGE B7

A Rare Reply From an Owner

Steve Cohen’s candid comments about a Mets contract negotiation were refreshing, but walk a fine legal line. PAGE B8

ARTS C1-6

Amid Crisis, On With the Show

Despite the devastation in Los Angeles, Grammy organizers decided the region would be best served by proceeding with the event. But they want to ensure that it strikes the right tone. PAGE C1

Mona Lisa to Get Own Room

Besides the new arrangements for the masterpiece, the Louvre plans an upgrade to alleviate crowds. It will also charge higher fees for visitors from outside the European Union. PAGE C2

OPINION A22-23

Bret Stephens

PAGE A22



FOOD D1-8

Delightful Dumplings

Just in time for Lunar New Year, we present a variety of options that might help you get a good start on the months ahead. Above, chile oil wontons. PAGE D7

