

“All the News  
That’s Fit to Print”

# The New York Times

**THE WEATHER**  
Today, partly sunny, dry, high 46.  
Tonight, dry, cloudy, light wind, low 36.  
Tomorrow, mostly cloudy, a rain or snow shower expected, high 42.  
Weather map appears on Page A15.

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JJJI PRESS, VIA AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

**Five Are Killed in Plane Collision in Tokyo**  
The casualties were all on a Coast Guard plane; 367 passengers and 12 crew members on a commercial jet were evacuated. Page A7.

## Gay Resigns After Charges Of Plagiarism

This article is by *Jennifer Schuessler, Anemona Hartocollis, Michael Levenson and Alan Blind-er.*

Harvard’s president, Claudine Gay, announced her resignation on Tuesday, after her presidency had become engulfed in crisis over accusations of plagiarism and what some called her insufficient response to antisemitism on campus after the Hamas-led attacks on Israel on Oct. 7.

In announcing she would step down immediately, Dr. Gay, Harvard’s first Black president and the second woman to lead the university, ended a turbulent tenure that began last July. She will have the shortest stint in office of any



KEN CEDENO/REUTERS

Claudine Gay became the president of Harvard in July.

Harvard president since its founding in 1636.

Alan M. Garber, an economist and physician who is Harvard’s provost and chief academic officer, will serve as interim president. Dr. Gay will remain a tenured professor of government and African and African American studies.

Dr. Gay became the second university president to resign in recent weeks, after she and the presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and M.I.T. appeared in a Dec. 5 congressional hearing in which they appeared to evade the question of whether students who called for the genocide of Jews should be punished.

Penn’s president, M. Elizabeth Magill, resigned four days after that hearing. Sally Kornbluth, M.I.T.’s president, has also faced

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## New York Trial May Force Out N.R.A. Leader

By DANNY HAKIM

For decades, Wayne LaPierre, the National Rifle Association’s longtime leader, has been a survivor. He has endured waves of palace intrigue, corruption scandals and embarrassing revelations, including leaked video that captured his inability to shoot an elephant at point-blank range while on a safari.

But now, Mr. LaPierre, 74, faces his gravest challenge, as a legal showdown with New York’s attorney general, Letitia James, goes to trial in a Manhattan courtroom. Ms. James, in a lawsuit filed amid an abrupt effort by the N.R.A. to clean up its practices, seeks to oust him from the group after reports of corruption and mismanagement.

Much has changed since Ms. James began investigating the N.R.A. four years ago. The organization, long a lobbying juggernaut, is a kind of ghost ship. After closing its media arm, NRATV, in 2019, it has largely lost its voice, and Mr. LaPierre rarely makes public pronouncements. Membership has plummeted to 4.2 million from nearly six million five years ago. Revenue is down 44 percent since 2016, according to its internal audits, and legal costs have soared to tens of millions a year.

When the N.R.A. filed for bankruptcy in Texas nearly three years ago, the step was part of a strategy to move to that state amid the New York investigation. But a Texas judge dismissed the case, saying the N.R.A. was using the filing “to address a regulatory enforcement problem, not a financial one.” Now, longtime insiders say, the organization may be reaching a point where a legitimate bankruptcy filing is necessary.

Even with the N.R.A. moribund, Mr. LaPierre’s legacy as a lobbyist, if not as a marksman, remains intact. The gun rights movement has become a bulwark of red-state politics during his more than three decades at the group’s helm. In recent years, significant federal gun control measures have been a nonstarter for Republicans despite a proliferation of mass shootings.

Mr. LaPierre is among four defendants in the suit brought by Ms. James in 2020. Others include

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## Asian Americans Say Careers In Government Are Curtailed

By EDWARD WONG  
and AMY QIN

WASHINGTON — When Thomas Wong set foot in the United States Embassy in Beijing last summer for a new diplomatic posting, it was vindication after years of battling the State Department over a perceived intelligence threat — himself.

Diplomatic Security officers had informed him when he joined the foreign service more than a decade ago that they were banning him from working in China. In a letter, he said, they wrongly cited the vague potential for undue “foreign preference” and suggested he could be vulnerable to “foreign influence.”

Mr. Wong had become a U.S. diplomat thinking that China was where he could have the greatest impact. He had grown up in a Chinese-speaking household and studied in the country. And as a graduate of West Point who had

## U.S. Security Risk Cited Amid China Spy War

done an Army tour in the Balkans, he thought he had experience that could prove valuable in navigating relations with the United States’ greatest military and economic rival.

As he looked into the ban, he discovered that other diplomats — including many Asian American ones — faced similar restrictions. Security officers never gave the exact reasons, and they made the decisions in secret based on information gathered during the initial security clearance process. Thousands of diplomats have been affected by restrictions over the years.

Similar issues range across U.S. government agencies involved in foreign policy and national security.

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## Israelis Facing Identity Crisis On Two Fronts

*Court and War Deepen  
Questions Over Future*

By STEVEN ERLANGER

The decision by the Israeli Supreme Court to reject legislative control over the judiciary ends for now the languishing effort by the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu to diminish the courts, which had already sparked nine months of protests that only ended when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7.

The protests had deeply divided Israel, but the subsequent war united it, with even pilots and reservists who had vowed to ignore military exercises immediately showing up to fight before they were called.

If the court’s decision on Monday ripped off this wartime poultice, displaying anew the cultural war at the heart of Israeli politics, Mr. Netanyahu and his government responded by appealing again to wartime unity to try to downplay their loss. It was another version of Mr. Netanyahu’s argument against just about every critic of his performance and his policies — that these are all subjects to be discussed “after the war.”

And the ruling of the court, however important, is expected to have little or no impact on the conduct of the war itself.

“I don’t think the ruling will change anything,” said Amit Segal, a political columnist for the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth who reported a leak of the ruling and is considered close to Mr. Netanyahu. Even before the war, he said, “Netanyahu did not have enough artillery, so to speak, to overwhelm the opponents.” So it helps him that this ruling has arrived during war, Mr. Segal said, because “he can justify a lack of reaction, and after the war he will have more pressing matters,” like his own political survival.

But the court and the war are connected in a way, because they are both crucial to Israel’s future and future identity. Israel regards the war as existential — the best way to restore its reputation in the region as ineradicable and as a beacon of security for Jews worldwide. The court decision goes to the heart of the debate over whether Israel will

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## BLAST IN BEIRUT KILLS OPERATIVE AT TOP OF HAMAS

*ATTACK TIED TO ISRAEL*

**Figure Is Group’s Highest  
to Be Assassinated  
Since Oct. 7**

This article is by *Ben Hubbard, Ronen Bergman, Aaron Boxerman, Euan Ward and Eric Schmitt.*

Hamas on Tuesday accused Israel of killing Saleh al-Arouri, a top leader of the group, along with two commanders from its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades. Mr. al-Arouri is the senior-most Hamas figure to be killed since Israel vowed to destroy the organization and eliminate its leadership after a deadly Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7.

Mr. al-Arouri was assassinated in an explosion in a suburb of Beirut, Lebanon’s capital, the first such assassination of a top Hamas official outside the West Bank and Gaza in recent years. It comes as officials across the region are worried that the war in Gaza may ignite a wider conflagration.

Israeli officials would not comment on whether their forces had targeted Mr. al-Arouri, but officials from Lebanon and the United States ascribed the attack to Israel. A senior U.S. official said it was most likely the first of many strikes that Israel would carry out against Hamas operatives connected to the Oct. 7 assault.

“No one is safe if they had any hand in planning, raising money for or carrying out these attacks,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk about sensitive internal discussions. Citing Israel’s vow to hunt down the perpetrators of the Oct. 7 attack wherever they are, the official added, “This is just the beginning, and it’ll go on for years.”

The explosion shattered the tense calm that had prevailed in Beirut ever since Hezbollah, the powerful Lebanese militant group that is a Hamas ally, began clashing with Israeli forces after the Oct. 7 attack. Unlike southern Lebanon, which has been engulfed by the fighting and has seen tens of thousands of people displaced, Beirut had not been targeted in the conflict.

Videos verified by The New York Times show at least one car engulfed in flames in front of a high-rise building after the explosion.

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## A Big Bet on a Pyramid Brings Signs of a Revival to San Francisco

By HEATHER KNIGHT

SAN FRANCISCO — It seemed like the last place one might invest a billion dollars on an office building in October 2020.

San Francisco’s downtown symbolized all that had gone wrong with American cities during the pandemic. The empty office towers. The shops and restaurants boarded up with plywood. The dirty streets, the petty crime, the eerily silent transit stations.

But Michael Shvo, the New York real estate titan, decided there was one building he had to have here, one that has been synonymous with the San Francisco skyline: the Transamerica Pyramid.

Mr. Shvo paid \$650 million for the tower on San Francisco’s Montgomery Street, long hailed as “the Wall Street of the West” for its concentration of financial institutions, including the insurance company after which the triangular skyscraper is named. He then spent another \$400 million to renovate the tower and turn it into an attraction for businesses and visitors alike.

If his bet pays off, the revamped



JIM WILSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Transamerica Pyramid was bought for \$650 million and had a \$400 million renovation.

tower and blocks below could serve as a bellwether for the beleaguered city’s recovery and a road map for other downtowns that have struggled to rebound from the pandemic. The key, Mr. Shvo argues, is turning down-

towns into spaces where people actually want to be, rather than places their bosses say they have to be.

“I’ve always believed in San Francisco. The difference was, I was optimistic with a billion-dol-

lar check in my hand,” Mr. Shvo said, wearing his customary black T-shirt, black jeans and black sneakers while standing on the 36th floor of the Transamerica Pyramid.

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### INTERNATIONAL A4-10

#### Denmark’s Modern Monarch

Like King Charles III of Britain, Prince Frederik, who will soon ascend to his country’s throne, has embraced environmental issues. PAGE A10

#### Pounding Kyiv From the Sky

Russia hit Ukraine’s capital with dozens of missiles and drones, part of an escalating cycle of air assaults. PAGE A4

### OBITUARIES A16-17

#### Cerebral Browns Quarterback

Frank Ryan led Cleveland to the 1964 N.F.L. title and later earned a Ph.D. in mathematics. He was 87. PAGE A17



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Souvenir vendors who crowded walkways on New York City’s bridges are now barred from selling there. PAGE A11

#### New Accusation for Menendez

Federal prosecutors said the Democratic senator from New Jersey accepted bribes to help Qatar. PAGE A14

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When financial institutions close customer accounts because of “suspicious activity,” chaos and anxiety ensue. It doesn’t have to be this way. PAGE B1

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The ski racer Mikaela Shiffrin has long seen Taylor Swift as a guide for navigating adversity and success. PAGE B6

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The Cowboys and the Eagles, and the Bills and the Dolphins, take their divisional battles into Week 18. PAGE B7

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Melanie La Barrie, who brought the role of Angélique in “& Juliet” from the West End to Broadway, flew back to London on New Year’s Eve with “Hadestown” on the horizon. PAGE C1

#### Your Own Starring Roles

Networks have been offering immersive experiences to promote series like “Squid Game” and “Only Murders in the Building.” But are those efforts little more than marketing? PAGE C1

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#### Bret Stephens

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#### Salts of the Earth

Table salt, kosher salt, finishing salt: The choices might be confusing, but we can help. Above, fleur de sel being harvested in southern France. PAGE D1

