

Biden says he'll shut border if bill passes

President shifts position, pledges to use potential new powers right away

BY TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA AND LIZ GOODWIN

President Biden said Friday that he would use new emergency authorities to “shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed” if Congress passes a bipartisan immigration plan that the Senate has been negotiating.

The comments signified a remarkable shift in tone for a Democratic president and underscored the urgency of the issue for his reelection campaign as immigration remains one of his most vexing political and policy challenges.

In a lengthy statement Friday, Biden praised the bipartisan border deal senators have been negotiating, calling it “the toughest and fairest set of reforms to secure the border we’ve ever had in our country.”

“It would give me, as President, a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed,” he said. “And if given that authority, I would use it the day I sign the bill into law.”

Biden is referencing a new expulsion authority senators have negotiated that would kick in on days unauthorized border crossings reach 5,000 over a five-day average, according to two people familiar with the outlines of the deal who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private details. SEE BORDER ON A4

Trump must pay \$83M for defamation

Verdict marks his second loss in a year to Carroll; he plans another appeal

BY SHAYNA JACOBS AND MARK BERMAN

NEW YORK — A civil jury on Friday ordered Donald Trump to pay the writer E. Jean Carroll more than \$83 million for defaming her, a hefty financial penalty that doubled as a remarkable denunciation of his rhetoric.

The federal court jury’s verdict delivered a stinging courtroom loss to the former president as he closes in on another Republican presidential nomination. At the same time, it illustrated the degree to which Trump’s year could be defined as much by courtrooms as the campaign trail.

Trump is facing a tangled web of potential financial and legal jeopardy, including four criminal cases and a civil fraud case that could also end with a monetary penalty.

This case marked the second time in less than a year that jurors have concluded that Trump wronged Carroll and owed her recompense. She accused him in 2019 of sexually assaulting her two decades earlier, and Trump responded with a SEE TRUMP ON A4

Colorado ballot: Voters urge high court to bar Trump from primary. A2



PHOTOS BY MUHAMMAD FADLI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Indonesia hopes to feed itself, but planet is paying

Clearing expansive peatlands for farming carries the risk of massive carbon releases

BY REBECCA TAN IN BENTUK JAYA, INDONESIA

Indonesia has been clearing tens of thousands of acres of densely vegetated peatland for farming, releasing massive amounts of carbon that had been sequestered below for centuries and destroying one of the Earth’s most effective means of storing greenhouse gases.

The country is home to as much as half of the planet’s tropical peatland, a unique ecosystem that scientists say is vital to averting the worst results of climate change. Government leaders have made halting efforts to protect peatlands over the last two decades, but three years ago, when the pandemic disrupted food supply chains, officials launched an ambitious land-clearance operation in a push to expand the cultivation of crops and cut Indonesia’s reliance on expensive imports.

By transforming 2,000 to 4,000 square miles of what environmental groups say is predominantly peatland into fields of rice, corn and cassava, the government projects SEE INDONESIA ON A8



TOP: Rivers flood peatlands in the Kalimantan region of Indonesia. In the dry season, damaged peatlands become parched and combustible. **ABOVE:** Tawu, 72, said she has struggled to grow rice on land cleared by the government.

A cross burned near their home. In S.C., it’s not a hate crime.

Debate over their case comes as legislators across U.S. look at statutes against bias incidents

BY TIM CRAIG

Monica and Shawn Williams, both Black veterans of the U.S. Army, thought they had bought a retirement home in a neighborhood that lived up to South Carolina’s slogan: “Smiling Faces, Beautiful Places.”

But within hours of moving into their three-bedroom house near Myrtle Beach in 2021, the Williamses said their next-door neighbors, a White couple, started scowling at them. The uncomfortable stares eventually led to racial slurs and a bitter two-year dispute. Then, on the day after Thanksgiving, they discovered a cross set on fire just outside their yard.

“I can’t believe what I am seeing,” Shawn Williams, 59, said he thought. A dozen relatives visiting for the holiday also grew distraught.

When Horry County Police Department officers and firefighters arrived, the neighbors stood near the cross and hurled racial epithets at the family, according to police reports. But police left that SEE HATE CRIMES ON A5



TRAVIS DOVE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Monica and Shawn Williams at their home in Charlotte, where they have been staying since a cross burning near their residence in South Carolina. It is one of two states without a hate-crimes law.

Israel ordered to limit deaths

U.N. COURT DOESN’T CALL FOR CEASE-FIRE

Finding says plausibility of genocide impels haste

BY EMILY RAUHALA AND STEVE HENDRIX

THE HAGUE — The International Court of Justice on Friday ordered Israel to do more to prevent the killing of civilians in Gaza but did not call for a cease-fire, disappointing Palestinians who had hoped the court would endorse their pleas for immediate relief from the violence.

At a closely watched hearing at The Hague’s Peace Palace, the court confirmed that it has jurisdiction in the landmark case brought by South Africa last month and in a preliminary finding said the plausibility of genocide makes the need to prevent harm to civilians urgent.

In an order read out by court president Joan E. Donoghue, the panel called on Israel to prevent the possibility of genocide in its war on Hamas, allow more aid into Gaza and sanction its officials and soldiers for comments that amount to incitement. It directed Israel to submit a report within one month outlining how it is SEE ISRAEL ON A7

West Bank killing: American teen’s family looks for answers. A7

In Ukraine, U.S. dials back plans to take turf

Strategy this year centers on holding battlefield lines, building strength

BY KAREN DEYOUNG, MICHAEL BIRNBAUM, ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN AND EMILY RAUHALA

Still smarting from last year’s failed counteroffensive in Ukraine, the Biden administration is putting together a new strategy that will de-emphasize winning back territory and focus instead on helping Ukraine fend off new Russian advances while moving toward a long-term goal of strengthening its fighting force and economy.

The emerging plan is a sharp change from last year, when the U.S. and allied militaries rushed training and sophisticated equipment to Kyiv in hopes that it could quickly push back Russian forces occupying eastern and southern Ukraine. That effort foundered, largely on Russia’s heavily fortified minefields and front line trenches.

“It’s pretty clear that it will be difficult for them to try to mount the same kind of major push on all fronts that they tried to do last year,” a senior administration official said.

SEE UKRAINE ON A10

POWs’ fate: Kyiv doubts Russian claim of deaths in plane crash. A10

IN THE NEWS

Energy project pause In a win for climate activists, a directive from President Biden could push the approval of new liquefied natural gas initiatives beyond the election. A12

End of an era Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.) announced that he will retire after serving 11 terms in Congress. B1

THE NATION

A sociology class will no longer count toward Florida college graduation requirements. A3
A group of House members urged President Biden to seek approval for strikes on Yemen. A4

THE WORLD

Israel began recruiting workers from India to address a labor shortage worsened by the war in Gaza, during which Palestinian laborers are being barred from the country. A6

THE ECONOMY

Senators questioned the assisted-living industry over the dangers of poor care. A11
Taylor Swift fans angrily took to social media as fake pornographic images of the singer, probably created by artificial intelligence, spread online. A12

THE REGION

Prince George’s officials charged a woman after a spate of hit-and-runs and stabbings that left six injured. B1
Record warmth surged into the region as D.C. hit 80 degrees, the city’s highest January temperature since records began in 1872. B1

STYLE

Brittney Spencer navigated her path to Nashville with “universal” country music. C1

SPORTS

The NFL told players from teams in next month’s Super Bowl in Las Vegas that they are barred from gambling in any form that week. D1

BUSINESS NEWS.....	A11
COMICS.....	C5
OPINION PAGES.....	A13
OBITUARIES.....	B4
TELEVISION.....	C3
WORLD NEWS.....	A6

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