

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, some sunshine, breezy, not as warm, lower humidity, high 82. **Tonight**, clear, cooler, low 62. **Tomorrow**, mostly sunny, low humidity, high 78. Weather map, Page A20.

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Biden Striving For a Foothold In a Viral Duel

Online Following That Badly Trails Trump’s

By KEN BENSINGER

On a Friday afternoon in late April, President Biden brought celebrities and elite social media influencers together for a White House reception. Fran Drescher and David Cross mingled with Ilona Maher, a rugby star, and V from @underthedesknews, at a mixer meant to generate warm feelings and badly needed pro-Biden content.

Jonathan M. Katz, an independent journalist and sharp critic of the administration, was shocked to get an invitation. When he met Mr. Biden, he pointedly asked about military aid to Israel and suggested he was supporting a “genocide.” Mr. Biden answered politely, but then appeared to grow impatient. “I know you’re a typical press guy,” he said. “I trust you as far as I can throw your phone.” Aides then ushered Mr. Katz away.

The episode, which Mr. Katz recorded on video and shared with his roughly 100,000 followers, was one in a series of Mr. Biden’s awkward attempts to manufacture online enthusiasm for his candidacy.

For months, the president’s campaign has watched as its rival, Donald J. Trump, has surfed on his popularity among the very online. Mr. Trump’s supporters produce an endless stream of memes, videos and adoring posts — all essentially free advertising — that reach a crucial slice of voters.

Mr. Biden and his allies are working furiously to build a comparable online army, trying to persuade, or in some cases pay, people to sing Mr. Biden’s praises to their large followings. They are finding that social media feeds are difficult territory for an 81-year-old president whose policies on Gaza and immigration are unpopular on the left.

“It’s clear we have to use influencers or creators as a way to

Continued on Page A12



RENAUD PHILIPPE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Rev. Gérard Tsatselam, beside the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is dealing with the fallout from accusations against a predecessor.

Parishioners Wanted to Burn the Church. He Came to Save It.

By NORIMITSU ONISHI

UNAMEN SHIPU, Quebec — The Rev. Gérard Tsatselam boarded the ferryboat and settled in his usual place, on a reclining seat, at the back of a cold, unlit room that would have been packed in summer. Uneasy, he sat shrouded in his large, black coat as high winter winds delayed the boat’s arrival in the village where he was trying to save the church.

Except for a quick stopover for a funeral, he had not visited his parish — in Unamen Shipu, an Indigenous reserve on the frigid,

isolated coast of northeastern Quebec — in months. Mold had invaded the presbytery and left him scrambling for lodging on each visit.

Another reason behind his unease was the enduring fallout from the accusations of sexual and other abuse by a predecessor, a Belgian priest. Though the transgressions dated back decades, during what Father Gérard called the Roman Catholic Church’s “colonial” era, dealing with the parishioners’ anger and distrust had fallen to him — a priest and missionary from the Central African nation of Camer-

Priest From Cameroon Confronts Legacy of Abuse in Quebec

oon.

Father Gérard had been Unamen Shipu’s priest for four years, and his predecessor long dead, when the accusations were leveled in 2017.

“The moment they came out, the dynamics changed,” he had said before boarding. “There’s a before and an after.”

He had watched, helplessly, as most of his parishioners broke with the church.

Now, returning to Unamen Shipu, Father Gérard planned to comfort his dwindling flock and restore the faith of those who had left. He would try to assuage the rage that had fueled threats to burn down the presbytery and to cast his predecessor’s body into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

“It’s a complex terrain,” Father Gérard said. “People are still Christian. They’re religious, they believe, they still have faith. But they’re really hurting a lot.”

Continued on Page A8

Gay Catholics Weigh Intent Of Pope’s Slur

By AMY HARMON

This was the pope who asked, “Who am I to judge?” in response to a question about gay priests in 2013. He announced last year that he would allow priests to bless same-sex couples, defying conservative critics in the Roman Catholic Church. And he apologized only weeks ago, in a statement from the Vatican, for using an offensive Italian term for gay men at a conference of bishops.

So reports that Pope Francis had repeated the slur during a meeting with priests in Rome this week set off a wave of confusion and hurt among some gay Catholics who have carefully parsed his comments over the years for signs of greater acceptance from the church.

In interviews and public statements, some supporters of more acceptance for L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics by the church suggested that the pope had not fully understood the connotations of the term. Others said his remarks, made in reference to the presence of gay men in seminaries and the clergy, showed the limits of his tolerance. And some said they saw the pope’s comments as an unfortunate

Continued on Page A13



Pope Francis

How Baptists And the G.O.P. Parted on I.V.F.

By RUTH GRAHAM

About a month after the Alabama Supreme Court ruled in February that frozen embryos were to be considered children under the law, Andrew T. Walker, an ethicist at a Southern Baptist seminary in Kentucky, called a friend with an idea: to spread Alabama’s argument beyond Alabama.

The Alabama ruling, which had threatened access to in vitro fertilization and other reproductive services in the state, caught many Americans, including conservatives, off guard. The idea that fertility treatments could be morally and legally questionable rattled many anti-abortion voters who had used such procedures to expand their families. And it further frayed the increasingly tense alliance between the anti-abortion movement and the Republican Party, which saw political peril in going after I.V.F.

Four months later, Dr. Walker succeeded. On Wednesday, the Southern Baptist Convention, the country’s largest Protestant denomination, voted to condemn the use of reproductive technologies like I.V.F. that end in the destruction of “frozen embryonic human beings.” The resolution passed by what appeared to be the overwhelming majority of Baptists that gathered in Indianapolis for their annual meeting.

The moment was especially

Continued on Page A13



SCOTT MCINTYRE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Painful Reminder of School Shooting

The building in Parkland, Fla., where an attack took place in 2018 is being torn down. Page A17.

Need a Taxi in Wuhan? The Car May Not Have a Human Driver.

By KEITH BRADSHER

WUHAN, China — The world’s largest experiment in driverless cars is underway on the busy streets of Wuhan, a city in central China with 11 million people, 4.5 million cars, eight-lane expressways and towering bridges over the muddy waters of the Yangtze River.

A fleet of 500 taxis navigated by

computers, often with no safety drivers in them for backup, buzz around. The company that operates them, the tech giant Baidu, said last month that it would add a further 1,000 of the so-called robot taxis in Wuhan.

Across China, 16 or more cities have allowed companies to test driverless vehicles on public roads, and at least 19 Chinese automakers and their suppliers are

China Jumps to Front as Tesla Falls Behind

competing to establish global leadership in the field. No other country is moving as aggressively.

The government is providing the companies significant help. In

addition to cities designating on-road testing areas for robot taxis, sensors are limiting online discussion of safety incidents and crashes to restrain public fears about the nascent technology.

Surveys by J.D. Power, an automotive consulting firm, found that Chinese drivers are more willing than Americans to trust computers to guide their cars.

Continued on Page A5



BUSINESS B1-6

Life After a Bridge Falls

Congestion in Baltimore has increased, and residents are worried that traffic will get worse. PAGE B1

Suspect Titanium on Jets

The material, which was purchased from a Chinese company, was sold with falsified documents. PAGE B1

INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Chinese Activists Found Guilty

A feminist journalist and a labor activist were convicted of subversion, a vaguely worded charge seen as a tool for muzzling dissent. PAGE A4

Ramaphosa Gets 2nd Term

South Africa’s president was re-elected by a fragile coalition, signaling a new era of political uncertainty. PAGE A10

SPORTS B7-10

A Risk That’s Paying Off

Shota Imanaga is becoming a star pitcher for the Cubs. How did so many other teams not see it coming? PAGE B7

ARTS C1-6

Tony Predictions From the Voters

In a survey of a quarter of Tony voters before Sunday’s ceremony, one consensus emerges: Sondheim’s onetime flop “Merrily We Roll Along” seems destined for redemption. PAGE C1



The Dragons Are Grounded

The second season of HBO’s “Game of Thrones” prequel, “House of the Dragon,” gets off to an earthbound start, more medieval civics lesson than engaging visual drama. PAGE C1

NATIONAL A11-17

Frustration Over a Rematch

The Grand Rapids area helped deliver Michigan to Donald J. Trump in 2016 and to President Biden four years later. Many voters are underwhelmed and longing for new options. PAGE A11

Defense Bill Controversy

The annual legislation emerged from a House committee with bipartisan backing, but Republicans loaded it with mandates targeting abortion, transgender care and diversity. PAGE A14

OPINION A18-19

John McWhorter

PAGE A18

THIS WEEKEND

