



Heavy rain 57/32 • Tomorrow: Sunny, breezy 55/35 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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In Israel, doubling down on defiance

Leaders’ rebuke of U.S. warning not to invade Rafah is latest example

BY MICHAEL BIRNBAUM, KAREN DEYOUNG, LOUISA LOVELUCK AND MIRIAM BERGER

TEL AVIV — Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Israeli leaders confronted each other Friday about the future of the war in Gaza, with the top U.S. diplomat urging Israel not to invade a city packed with civilians, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defiantly declaring that “we’ll do it by ourselves.”

The tense back-and-forth — on the same day that Israel’s far-right finance minister announced the seizure of three square miles of Palestinian territory in the West Bank — marked the latest show of Israeli defiance in the face of U.S. demands that it reduce civilian suffering in Gaza and move toward a two-state solution.

The exchange came at the end of Blinken’s trip to the region and appeared to signal that Israeli leaders have little interest in moderating their actions in Gaza, despite increasingly sharp criticism from their main military backer and ally.

According to the Gaza Health SEE GAZA ON A11

Partisan divide: Republicans in Congress embrace Netanyahu. A6

Israel’s assurances: U.S. weighs claims of compliance on arms. A10

ELECTION 2024

Stutter is a story both campaigns want to tell

BY MATT VISER

President Biden recently sent out a video of a meeting with a 9-year-old with a stutter, telling the young boy, “Don’t let anybody tell you that you can’t do anything.”

He wrote about having “struggled with a stutter all my life,” an unusual nod to the ongoing nature of his battle. And in interviews, he has spoken at length about the childhood trauma and embarrassment of struggling to speak.

Donald Trump has mocked Biden in recent weeks by falsely claiming that the president is stuttering during his speeches, and he has parodied the purported stammer on occasion, but Biden has been relying on a longtime centerpiece of his personal and political biography, embracing it to sell himself as the candidate of compassion for the 2024 presidential rematch.

The election may ultimately be decided by sweeping issues like the economy, immigration, abortion and democracy. But the early phase has also been marked by a discussion, in ways both crass and subtle, of a far more personal topic — Biden’s stutter. That back-and-forth reflects the candidates’ sharply differing views of disability and struggle, and their role in a divided political culture that can reward ridicule more than acceptance.

SEE BIDEN ON A4



A law enforcement officer stands outside Crocus City Hall in Moscow amid a massive blaze on Friday, when the deadliest terrorist attack in Russia for over a decade left dozens dead or injured. More than 50 ambulance teams had been deployed to the concert venue.

After absence, Catherine shares cancer diagnosis

Revelation follows weeks of speculation over her January surgery

BY KARLA ADAM, BRYAN PIETSCH AND JENNIFER HASSAN

LONDON — Catherine, Princess of Wales, announced in a personal video message Friday that she has been diagnosed with cancer and that she was in the early stages of chemotherapy.

The news came as a “huge



In a prerecorded message, Catherine, Princess of Wales, said that she is in the early stages of preventive chemotherapy.

shock,” Catherine said in a prerecorded message posted on X and broadcast on the BBC.

“William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family,” Catherine said.

She said that after she underwent major abdominal surgery in January, she thought that her condition was noncancerous.

“The surgery was successful, however, tests after the operation found that cancer had been SEE CANCER ON A12

Monica Hesse: Kate shared her health news. Happy now? C1

Agent says DHS failed to shield her from abuse

Lawsuit filed after agency rejected sexual misconduct claims over explicit texts from supervisor

BY MARIA SACCHETTI

NEWARK — Emiljana Kodra felt thrilled to land a job as a U.S. immigration agent after serving as a police officer in Baltimore, until one of her new supervisors started texting her.

He asked what kind of underwear she wore. He wondered about the warmth of her body.

At the office, he allegedly grabbed her, according to a federal lawsuit she filed against the Department of Homeland Security. After she resisted him, Kodra said, she was transferred to one of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s least desirable assignments, inside a dingy New Jersey detention center.

“I would go home and tell my mom and cry,” Kodra, 43, said during a recent interview at a Newark coffee shop. “I felt scared. I felt disgusted.”

DHS and ICE officials declined to comment on Kodra’s allegations because the lawsuit is pending. ICE said the agency takes misconduct seriously and refers allegations of improper behavior for possible internal investigations.

Kodra filed the federal lawsuit after DHS rejected her allegations

about harassment by her supervisor and other DHS employees, after she filed a formal complaint with the agency. The department said in a written decision last year that the text messages appeared mutual and that managers transferred Kodra after a female employee accused her of unprofessional conduct, which Kodra denied in interviews and court records.

Labor lawyers say cases such as Kodra’s illustrate how difficult it can be for workers to pursue, let alone win, a harassment complaint in the federal government. Employees must show they were targeted because of their sex and that the treatment they experienced created a hostile work environment. Even then, there is no guarantee that a harasser will be disciplined.

Researchers say sexual harassment is especially pervasive in law enforcement, where women make up just 12 percent of sworn officers. The Department of Homeland Security has the largest law enforcement population in the U.S. government, and the lowest share of female officers at 9.8 percent.

SEE ICE ON A7



Emiljana Kodra at her home in New Jersey last month. Last year, the Department of Homeland Security found the text messages her supervisor sent her appeared mutual.

Gunmen storm Moscow concert

AT LEAST 40 KILLED, OVER 100 INJURED

ISIS claims responsibility for deadly attack

BY FRANCESCA EBEL AND MARY ILYUSHINA

Several gunmen opened fire Friday night at Crocus City Hall, a popular concert venue on the outskirts of Moscow, Russian state news agencies reported. Dozens of people were reported injured or killed and the building was on fire in the most deadly terrorist attack in Russia for over a decade.

“People in camouflage, at least three, burst into the ground floor of the Crocus City Hall and opened fire from automatic weapons. There are definitely wounded,” state news agency RIA Novosti reported, citing its correspondent at the scene.

The terrorist group ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, according to its news agency. A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information, said the United States had “no reason to doubt” the claim.

“After that they threw a grenade or an incendiary bomb, which started a fire,” RIA Novosti added. “The people in the hall lay down on the floor to escape the shooting, and stayed there for 15-20 minutes, after which they began to crawl out. Many managed to get out.”

Videos, which were shared on Russian Telegram channels and verified by The Washington Post, show four men in camouflage entering a large marbled hall and opening fire, and shooters firing rounds in a concert hall, thick with smoke.

Other clips show scores of bodies slumped on benches or the ground as well as a large fire SEE MOSCOW ON A9

Roadblocks possible as Senate takes up spending

GOP could push vote on \$1.2 trillion package past shutdown deadline

BY JACOB BOGAGE

The House approved a \$1.2 trillion spending package Friday hours before a midnight government shutdown deadline, pressing the Senate against a ticking clock to pass the measure and setting off reverberations that threatened the GOP’s brittle House majority.

The bill, which passed by a 286-134 vote, would fund about three-quarters of the federal government for the next six months, while also raising military pay, eliminating U.S. funding for the U.N. relief agency for Palestinians and bolstering security at the U.S.-Mexico border.

But its passage through the House was more fraught than the vote total might appear: House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) SEE CONGRESS ON A14

IN THE NEWS

Social Security probe The agency’s internal watchdog office failed to properly notify some poor and disabled Americans before levying huge fines on them, a report found. A4

No early exit In a letter, the D.C. attorney general said the Wizards and Capitals were legally stuck in the District until 2047. B1

THE NATION **Arizona** election officials fear a repeat of pro-Trump disruptions in Maricopa County. A3 **Debunking** the most common false narratives surrounding birth control and IUDs. A5

THE WORLD **Ukraine** is racing to make weapons at home, despite a shortage of money and materials. A8 **Prince Harry** and his allies expanded their case against the Murdoch media empire. A12

THE ECONOMY **In a new stage** in the West’s fiscal war with Russia, U.S. officials are using bounties to snare people helping oligarchs defy sanctions. A13 **Lawmakers** have reported violent threats from TikTok users who are upset about a possible ban. A14

THE REGION **Rep. David Trone** (D-Md.) apologized for using racial slur instead of saying “bugaboo” during a hearing. B1 **Jewish people** in the area are struggling over how to observe Purim, the celebration of a story many say has parallels to the war in Gaza. B1

STYLE **Between** Biden rocking Hokas and Trump selling golden high-tops, why are we so obsessed with presidential sneakers? C1 **SPORTS** **The Maryland women** blow a 20-point lead, lose to Iowa State in the NCAA tournament. D1

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