

Vote leads to collapse of French government

No-confidence measure forces out prime minister as budget crisis escalates

BY ELLEN FRANCIS AND ANTHONY FAIOLA

A no-confidence vote in the French Parliament on Wednesday triggered the collapse of the government, plunging the country into political chaos and stoking anxiety about the euro zone's second-biggest economy.

Prime Minister Michel Barnier's administration becomes the shortest-serving government in the modern French republic and the first in six decades to be toppled by a no-confidence vote. Although the motion was put forward by a left-wing alliance, the swing votes of Marine Le Pen and her far-right lawmakers, wielding unprecedented influence, were key to its passage. The measure was adopted with 331 votes, more than the required majority.

The trouble is, there's no obvious cast of characters who could form a stable government. New legislative elections that might alter the political dynamics can't happen before summer. And without a government in place, France couldn't address the gaping hole in its public finances or resolve uncertainty that has the potential to spook markets and weigh on other euro-zone economies.

"We have reached a moment of truth and responsibility," Barnier said during Wednesday's parliamentary debate ahead of the vote. "This reality will not disappear by the magic of censure motions."

The turmoil in France — just weeks after the collapse of the

SEE FRANCE ON A13



JUSTIN LANE/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Police investigators at the scene outside the Midtown Manhattan hotel where UnitedHealthcare chief executive Brian Thompson was shot and killed early Wednesday in an apparent targeted attack. Thompson was walking to the hotel for an investors conference.

South Korean opposition moves to impeach Yoon

BY MICHELLE YE HEE LEE, KELLY KASULIS CHO AND NIHA MASIH

SEOUL — South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol is heading toward impeachment proceedings after his ill-fated attempt to impose martial law, with the six opposition parties on Wednesday submitting a motion to force Yoon from office.

The motion was likely to be formally introduced in the legislature on Thursday, meaning lawmakers could vote as soon as Friday. Although the move faces a considerable number of hur-

President's political future is in question after failed martial-law order

dles, it is clear that Yoon's political future is now dicey — whether he resigns or is ousted.

"I don't know what his end goal was here, because I think this was political suicide," said Park Sung-min, a veteran political consultant in Seoul. "It seems clear that President Yoon is now more likely to step down in the

middle of his term rather than seeing his term through to completion."

Already on Wednesday, a number of senior officials, including the defense minister, had tendered their resignations.

The upheaval injects uncertainty into South Korea's security relationship with the United States, which has strengthened under Yoon, and at a time of political transition in Washington.

It would also throw a wrench into warming relations between Seoul and Tokyo, and the two nations' attempts to join Wash-

ington in countering regional threats — Yoon's key foreign policy endeavor and one that has been warmly welcomed by the Biden administration.

Shortly before dawn Wednesday, less than six hours after imposing emergency martial law, Yoon rescinded his declaration, which he said was to stop "antistate" activities in the National Assembly. He deployed about 300 troops to the legislature, though they failed to stop 190 lawmakers from entering the chamber and overturning his decision.

SEE SOUTH KOREA ON A12

CEO killed in N.Y. ambush

INSURANCE CHIEF SHOT ON STREET

Police are hunting for masked gunman, motive

BY SHAYNA JACOBS, DANIEL GILBERT, TRISHA THADANI AND AARON GREGG

NEW YORK — UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was fatally shot on a Midtown Manhattan sidewalk early Wednesday morning in what police called a premeditated ambush that sent them on a manhunt for the unidentified gunman, who fled the area on a bicycle and was last seen heading into Central Park.

The health insurance executive from Minnesota was walking outside the New York Hilton Midtown at about 6:45 a.m., before an investors conference his company was holding in the hotel, when a gunman wearing a hood and a mask fired off several rounds from a pistol. Thompson had been staying in another hotel across the street.

He was killed in one of the busiest parts of the city, an area teeming with tourists as well as people in business suits. Even as New Yorkers prepared for a bustling Christmas season with the traditional tree lighting Wednesday night at Rockefeller Center, officers had cordoned off sections of 54th Street outside the Hilton with yellow crime scene tape and were counting 9mm casings on the ground.

Police tracked the gunman's

SEE SHOOTING ON A6

Justices likely to keep Tenn. ban on trans care for teens

BY ANN E. MARIMOW

The Supreme Court on Wednesday appeared likely to uphold a state ban on certain gender transition care for minors, with a majority of conservative justices expressing concern about intervening in a bitter national debate over whether transgender young people should have access to the treatments.

The justices were reviewing a Tennessee law that prohibits minors from using hormones and puberty blockers for gender transition. It is one of the most-watched cases of the term, coming at a time when a growing number of young people are identifying as transgender — though only a small fraction participate in the medical treatments — and after a presidential campaign that highlighted the polarizing issue.

Whatever the court decides will affect the law in Tennessee and the 23 other states that have banned similar treatments in recent years.

Throughout the argument, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, who are most often in the majority, repeatedly suggested that medical policies and technical questions about gender transition care

SEE COURT ON A2



REBECCA S. GRATZ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Deanna Jacobs's house in North Sioux City, South Dakota, collapsed in June's flooding.

To flood victims, Noem is a dubious pick

Potential DHS secretary bungled handling of S.D. disaster, some say

BY PETER JAMISON AND ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER IN NORTH SIOUX CITY, S.D.

The McCook Lake neighborhood had never flooded in the nearly three decades that Kathy Roberts had lived there, and nobody warned her that it would on the night of June 23.

So Roberts, a 50-year-old manager at a local mental health center, was astonished at the scene that greeted her as

she walked out her front door on Penrose Drive that Sunday night. A powerful hiss filled the air, she recalled, as if she had suddenly stepped under an invisible waterfall. Water was lapping up the street and pooling in her driveway. Within minutes, Roberts was knee-deep, struggling into the driver's seat of her Jeep Wrangler and fleeing alongside her screaming neighbors.

Roberts's home was nearly

destroyed in the floodwaters that scoured the neighborhood overnight, washing away roads and opening craters into which entire houses collapsed. But she also lost something else: her faith in Kristi L. Noem, the governor for whom Roberts had twice voted and had believed, until that night, was doing a fine job running South Dakota.

That opinion would change

SEE NOEM ON A8

History with alcohol shadows Hegseth's Pentagon selection

His interviews, writings show he has been blunt about his consumption

BY MICHAEL KRANISH, DAN LAMOTHE, SARAH ELLISON AND JOHN HUDSON

By Pete Hegseth's account, his heavy drinking began after a brush with death when an RPG ricocheted off his vehicle but didn't explode while serving in Iraq with an Army infantry unit. When he returned home to a Manhattan apartment after the deployment ended in 2006, disconnected from the people he served with while his wife at the time worked long hours, he turned to alcohol, he said.

"I'd look around at 10 o'clock and be like, 'What am I going to do today? How about I drink some beers? How about I go have some lunch and have some beers? How about I meet my one or two buddies and have some beers?'" Hegseth recounted in an August 2021 appearance on "The Will Cain Show" podcast. "And one beers leads to many, leads to self-medication, leads to 'I've earned this.' Like, 'Don't tell me I can't.'"

Allegations of excessive drinking have shadowed Hegseth's career in the years since as he's risen from running a veterans nonprofit to becoming a star Fox



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Pete Hegseth, Donald Trump's pick for defense secretary, said in a recent interview he "never had a drinking problem."

News host and now President-elect Donald Trump's choice to head the Defense Department — a selection that hangs in the balance on the Hill as some senators question his relationship with alcohol.

In 2017 at a Republican conference in California, Hegseth was so "visibly intoxicated" that it enabled a woman to be the

SEE HEGSETH ON A4

Navarro: China hawk to return to White House as senior adviser. **A6**

A new pick?: DeSantis, Waltz eyed for defense role, insiders say. **A7**

Chris Wright: Scientists say the Energy pick twists their work. **A14**

IN THE NEWS

Trump's pro-union pick The Oregon congresswoman chosen by the president-elect to lead the Labor Department is raising eyebrows among Senate conservatives. **A3**

Iranian proxies Tehran has deployed fighters to prop up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, but it's not clear if they can turn the tide. **A11**

THE NATION **Memphis police** have a systemic problem of excessive force, the Justice Department found. **A2** **Donald Trump's** top advisers renewed a push for a pardon for Edward Snowden. **A3**

THE WORLD **Police** conducted raids in Georgia as protests continued. **A10** **In a report,** Amnesty International said Israel is committing acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. **A11**

THE ECONOMY **A San Francisco jury** is weighing whether the killing of Cash App founder Bob Lee was a murder. **A16**

THE CLIMATE **The world** is veering away from climate catastrophe, but not fast enough to avoid some dangerous impacts. **A20**

THE REGION **D.C.'s** attorney general alleged that Amazon packages take longer to arrive for Prime subscribers in two majority-Black Zip codes. **B1** **Resident doctors** at George Washington University Hospital voted to authorize a strike. **B1**

STYLE **Jonathan Anderson,** the costume designer for the film "Queer," found original clothing from the 1950s for the movie set in Mexico City. **C1**

LOCAL LIVING **Our affinity** for pigeons has waned since World War II. Can we learn to love them again?

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