

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

VOL. CLXXIII . . . No. 60,033 © 2024 The New York Times Company SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024 Prices in Canada may be higher \$6.00



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JORDAN GALE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Taking the Pulse of Iowa

As the G.O.P. caucuses loom, voters like, from left, Jesse Gutierrez, Jaynie Kramer and Emilia Sanchez shared their thoughts. Page 16.

VOTERS IN TAIWAN SAY NO TO BEIJING

President-Elect Calls Out Authoritarianism

This article is by *Chris Buckley, Amy Chang Chien, John Liu and Damien Cave.*

TAIPEI, Taiwan — The Taiwanese politician Lai Ching-te has for years been reviled by China’s Communist Party as a dangerous foe who, by its account, could drag the two sides into a war by pressing for full independence for his island democracy. Right up to Saturday, when millions of Taiwanese voted for their next president, an official Beijing news outlet warned that Mr. Lai could take Taiwan “on a path of no return.”

Yet, despite China’s months of menacing warnings of a “war or peace” choice for Taiwan’s voters, Mr. Lai was elected president.

Mr. Lai, currently Taiwan’s vice president, secured 40 percent of the votes in the election, giving his Democratic Progressive Party, or D.P.P., a third term in a row in the presidential office. No party has achieved more than two successive terms since Taiwan began holding direct, democratic elections for its president in 1996.

At a D.P.P. gathering outside its headquarters in Taipei, thousands of supporters, many waving pink and green flags, cheered as Mr. Lai’s lead grew during the counting of the votes, which was displayed on a large screen on an outdoor stage.

Addressing his supporters at the event, Mr. Lai called for unity, while also pledging his commitment to defending Taiwan’s identity. “Between democracy and authoritarianism, we choose to stand on the side of democracy,” Mr. Lai said. “This is what this election campaign means to the world.”

The vote drew a strong voter turnout of 72 percent, including many who had flown home from abroad. In some polling stations, lines began forming even before voting started in the morning, with many multigenerational families showing up. Taiwanese citizens, who must vote in person, fanned out to reach nearly 18,000 polling stations in temples, churches, community centers and schools across the island.

Many of Mr. Lai’s supporters described feeling hopeful that he would protect Taiwan’s

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‘A Lifelong Nightmare’ in India’s Archaic Courts

By SAMEER YASIR

LAKSHMANPUR BATHE, India — When the armed men stormed into the village of lower-caste Indians, fanning out through its dirt lanes and flinging open the doors of its mud homes, Binod Paswan jumped into a grain silo and peered out in horror.

Within hours, witnesses say, upper-caste landlords massacred 58 Dalits, people once known as “untouchables,” most of them farmworkers in the eastern state of Bihar who had been agitating for higher wages. Seven of them were members of Mr. Paswan’s family.

The next day, he lodged a police complaint, and investigators soon filed charges. That was 26 years ago. He is still waiting — after conflicting verdicts and hundreds of court hearings, with some witnesses now dead or impaired by fading eyesight — for a resolution.

“A cry for justice turned into a lifelong nightmare for us,” said Mr. Paswan, 45.

In a vast nation with no short-

More Than 50 Million Cases Are Pending in a Glacial System

age of intractable problems, it is one of the longest-running and most far-reaching: India’s staggeringly overburdened judicial system.

The country’s economy is growing rapidly, technology is reshaping more than a billion lives and national leaders are striving for global power, but India seems to have few answers for the ever-deepening court backlogs that deprive citizens of their rights and hamper business activity.

More than 50 million cases are pending across the country, according to the National Judicial Data Grid — a pileup that has doubled over the past two decades. At the current pace, it would take more than 300 years to clear India’s docket.

There are many reasons for the backlogs. India has one of the world’s lowest ratios of judges to population, with just 21 per million people, compared with about 150 in the United States. For decades, India’s leaders and courts have set a target of 50 judges per million people. But there have been no sizable funding increases to hire more judges, improve court facilities and digitize procedures, as officials deem other priorities more important.

A rigid system with archaic rules inherited from the British also slows the process. Lawyers make endless oral arguments and produce lengthy written submissions. Little has changed even as government committees have recommended an end to the writing of testimonies by hand and to time-consuming procedures in examining witnesses.

Delays are endemic in both criminal and civil cases. About 77 percent of prisoners in India are awaiting trial, compared with one

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Grim Feelings Saturate Iowa Ahead of Vote

Bipartisan Dread of a Nation in Turmoil

By LISA LERER

ALTOONA, Iowa — Presidential elections traditionally speak to future aspirations, offering a vision of a better tomorrow, the hope and change of Barack Obama or the compassionate conservatism of George W. Bush. Yet this year, even before a single vote has been cast, a far darker sentiment has taken hold.

Across Iowa, as the first nominating contest approaches on Monday, voters plow through snowy streets to hear from candidates, mingle at campaign events and casually talk of the prospect of World War III, civil unrest and a nation coming apart at the seams.

Four years ago, voters worried about a spiraling pandemic, economic uncertainty and national protests. Now, in the first presidential election since the siege on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, those anxieties have metastasized into a grimmer, more existential dread about the very foundations of the American experiment.

“You get the feeling in Iowa right now that we’re sleepwalking into a nightmare and there’s nothing we can do about it,” said Doug Gross, a Republican lawyer who has been involved in Iowa politics for nearly four decades, ran for governor in 2002 and plans to support Nikki Haley in the state’s caucuses on Monday. “In Iowa, life isn’t lived in extremes, except the weather, and yet they still feel this dramatic sense of inevitable doom.”

Donald J. Trump, the dominant front-runner in the Republican primary race, bounces from courtroom to campaign trail, lacing his rhetoric with ominous threats of retribution and suggestions of dictatorial tendencies. President Biden condemns political violence and argues that if he loses, democracy itself could falter.

Bill Bradley, 80, who served for 18 years as a New Jersey senator, remembered when he ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2000, spending more than 75 days in Iowa during his bid. “We debated health care and taxes, which is reasonable,” he said, adding, “Civil war? No. World War III? No, no, no.”

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THE WEATHER
Today, partly sunny and colder with a snow shower, wet roads, high 40. Tonight, cold and mostly clear, low 23. Tomorrow, sunny breaks, high 32. Weather map is on Page 23.

NEWS ANALYSIS

None Wanted Regional War, But Here It Is

U.S. Strikes in Yemen Signal a Broader Fight

This article is by *Steven Erlanger, David E. Sanger, Farnaz Fassihi and Ronen Bergman.*

From the outbreak of the Israeli-Hamas war nearly 100 days ago, President Biden and his aides have struggled to keep the war contained, fearful that a regional escalation could quickly draw in American forces.

Now, with the American-led strike on nearly 30 sites in Yemen on Thursday and a smaller strike the next day, there is no longer a question of whether there will be a regional conflict. It has already begun. The biggest questions now are the conflict’s intensity and whether it can be contained.

This is exactly the outcome no one wanted, presumably including Iran.

“We’re not interested in a war with Yemen. We’re not interested in a conflict of any kind,” John F. Kirby, a White House spokesman, said on Friday. “In fact, everything the president has been doing has been trying to prevent any escalation of conflict, including the strikes last night.”

Mr. Biden’s decision to unleash airstrikes, after resisting calls to act against the Yemen-based Houthi militants whose repeated attacks on shipping in the Red Sea were beginning to take a toll on global commerce, is a clear shift in strategy. After issuing a series of warnings, officials said, Mr. Biden felt his hand was forced after a barrage of missile and drone attacks on Tuesday were directed at an American cargo ship and the Navy vessels around it.

“This is already a regional war, no longer limited to Gaza, but already spread to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen,” said Hugh Lovatt, a Mideast expert for the European Council on Foreign Relations. Washington, he added, wanted to demonstrate that it was ready to deter Iranian provocations, so it conspicuously placed its aircraft carriers and fighters in position to respond quickly. But those same positions

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How Netflix Reels In Viewers With Its Three-Word Hooks

By JOHN KOBLIN

LOS ANGELES — “Grey’s Anatomy” is “soapy” and “emotional.” “Emily in Paris” is “campy” and “quirky.” “Our Planet II” is “relaxing” and “captivating,” while “Gravity” is “suspenseful” and “visually striking.”

Words such as these — displayed near the synopsis and movie poster-style tile for each one of the thousands of titles on Netflix — appear to be scooped out of a grab bag.

In fact, they are a critical tool to induce viewers to click play, and a key to Netflix’s dominance.

The two- or three-word tags, meant to convey the gestalt of a show or movie, regularly help viewers choose a show from the service’s nearly endless library, the company says. The words are selected by about 30 employees — so-called taggers.

“Imagine magazines that have no cover lines, and there were just photographs on them,” said Allan Donald, a director of product at Netflix. “Tags make as much of a difference as a cover line in that snap ‘this is for me’ decision.”

As Netflix widens its Secretariat-like lead in the so-called streaming wars, the descriptive, if



ZIPENG ZHU

A team of about 30 strives to find those three magic words.

sometimes banal, tags stand out as an example of how the company stays ahead. Most rival streaming services don’t bother displaying tags, or don’t have the same financial resources to support a group of employees to do all the work behind them.

Netflix made around \$4.5 billion in profit over the last four quarters, while most of its competitors continued to lose money in streaming. It commands 247 million subscribers worldwide, more than double many other streaming services. It accounted for 7.4 percent of total television use in the United States in November, according to Nielsen, far outpacing Amazon Prime Video (3.4 percent), Hulu (2.7 percent) and Disney+ (2.1 percent).

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INTERNATIONAL 4-13

Dire Outlook in Ukraine’s East

Wearied and outnumbered, Kyiv’s forces are losing ground to Russia in the region, with foreign aid in doubt. PAGE 13

A Voice for a Lost Language

Blas Jaime and his daughter Evangelina displaying a greeting in Chaná, an Indigenous language he resurrected. PAGE 4



NATIONAL 14-22

Hallways of Bureaucracy

Under Florida rules, some students can’t get a Band-Aid or take a vision test without permission slips. And it’s up to schools to hunt them down. PAGE 14

Kerry to Resign Post

John Kerry, the special envoy for climate, is expected to join President Biden’s re-election campaign. PAGE 22

SPORTS 28-31

Ready for Her Comeback

With the Australian Open approaching, Naomi Osaka opened up on motherhood and her return to tennis. PAGE 28

ARTS & LEISURE

Success as a Laughing Matter

Taylor Tomlinson, the new host of the comedy show “After Midnight,” has emerged as one of the most in-demand superstars in comedy. PAGE 12

SUNDAY STYLES

Mean Girls at the Office

In 2002, the author Rosalind Wiseman defined teenage dynamics. Now she helps women in the workplace. PAGE 9

A Fashion Plate at City Hall

Ten suits, 19 ties, crisp white shirts and pin collars: a 30-day snapshot of Mayor Eric Adams’s style. PAGE 1

METROPOLITAN

Philanthropists Pulling Back

Wealthy donors are rethinking their personal charity in the face of the city’s escalating problems. PAGE 5

Tasty, Delicate and Dwindling

Long Island’s scallops, once abundant, now keep dying. Some fishermen continue to search for them. PAGE 1



SUNDAY BUSINESS

Questioning a Fitness Guru

Bryan Johnson says his regimen can slow aging. Followers abound, but scientists are skeptical. PAGE 6

Someone Changed Their Tune

When its songs were pirated, the folkie duo Bad Dog was pulled into the shadowy world of streaming fraud. PAGE 1

SUNDAY OPINION

Maureen Dowd

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