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Speaker Floats Possible Terms For Aid to Kyiv

Sign That a Plan Could Clear Congress Soon

By CATIE EDMONDSON

WASHINGTON — Speaker Mike Johnson has begun publicly laying out potential conditions for extending a fresh round of American military assistance to Ukraine, the strongest indication yet that he plans to push through the House a package that many Republicans view as toxic and have tried to block.

His terms may include tying the aid for Kyiv to a measure that would force President Biden to reverse a moratorium on new permits for liquefied natural gas export facilities, something that Republicans would see as a political victory against the Democratic president’s climate agenda. The move would also hand Mr. Johnson a powerful parochial win, unblocking a proposed export terminal in his home state, Louisiana, that would be situated along a shipping channel that connects the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Charles.

“When we return after this work period, we’ll be moving a product, but it’s going to have some important innovations,” Mr. Johnson said on Sunday in an interview on Fox News.

That strongly suggests that the aid package for Ukraine, which has been stalled on Capitol Hill for months amid Republican resistance, could clear Congress within weeks. It has strong support among Democrats and a large coalition of mainstream Republicans, and the main obstacle standing in its way in the House has been Mr. Johnson’s refusal to bring it up in the face of vehement hard-right opposition in the G.O.P. to sending more aid to Kyiv.

But after the Senate passed a \$95 billion aid package for Ukraine and Israel, and with Mr. Johnson facing pressure from the Biden administration and NATO allies, the Republican speaker has been searching for a path forward on the bill that would provoke the least political backlash in his own ranks.

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The aftermath of an Israeli attack on Monday on a building that Iran said was part of its embassy complex in Damascus, Syria.

THE WEATHER
Today, cloudy, steady rain, downpours may cause ponding on roads, high 49. **Tonight**, rain, low 41. **Tomorrow**, windy, heavy rain at times, high 46. Weather map is on Page B10.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE IN SYRIA TARGETS IRANIAN OFFICERS

AT LEAST SEVEN DEAD

Soldiers in Gaza Pull Out of Al-Shifa Hospital, Now ‘Wasteland’

This article is by Farnaz Fassihi, Ronen Bergman, Aaron Boxerman, Hiba Yazbek and Michael Levenson.

At least three senior commanders and four officers overseeing Iran’s covert operations in the Middle East were killed on Monday when Israeli warplanes struck a building in the Syrian capital that is part of the Iranian Embassy complex, according to Iranian and Syrian officials.

The strike in Damascus appeared to be among the deadliest attacks in a yearslong shadow war between Israel and Iran that has included the assassinations of Iranian military leaders and nuclear scientists.

That covert war has moved into the open as tensions between the countries have intensified over Israel’s military campaign in the Gaza Strip against Hamas, the Iranian-backed militia that led the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Four Israeli officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters, confirmed that Israel was behind the strike in Damascus but denied that the building had diplomatic status.

The Syrian ambassador to Iran, Shafiq Dayoub, though, said the attack had targeted a diplomatic building and was a “clear and complete violation of all international conventions and norms.”

Video circulating on social media after the strike showed a destroyed building next to the embassy, and photographs showed an entrance gate with a sign identifying it as the consular section. The embassy said on X that the building housed a consular section and the ambassador’s residence.

Footage broadcast by Iranian and Syrian news agencies showed a ruined building, burned cars, shattered glass and debris on the ground.

The dead included Gen. Mohammad Reza Zahedi, 65, who oversaw Iran’s covert military operations in Syria and Lebanon, two other generals and four officers in the Quds Force, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps said in a statement.

Ali Vaez, the Iran director for the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit that seeks to prevent wars, said that targeting a diplomatic facility would be “akin to

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Florida Court Allows Six-Week Ban on Abortion

By PATRICIA MAZZEI

MIAMI — The Florida Supreme Court overturned decades of legal precedent on Monday in ruling that privacy protections in the state’s Constitution do not extend to abortion, effectively allowing Florida to ban the procedure after six weeks of pregnancy.

But in a separate decision released at the same time, the justices allowed Florida voters to decide this fall whether to expand abortion access. The court ruled 4 to 3 that a proposed constitutional amendment that would guarantee the right to abortion “before viability,” usually around 24 weeks, could go on the November ballot.

The rulings encapsulated, in a single state on a single day, how the country has grappled with the abortion issue since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision that recognized federal abortion rights in 1973.

The conservative-leaning court found 6-1 that a 15-week abortion ban enacted in 2022 was constitutional. That ruling — in response to a lawsuit brought by Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union and several abortion providers — will allow a six-week ban enacted last year to take

Opens Door to a Vote on Expanded Access in a Separate Ruling

effect by May 1.

“Based on our analysis finding no clear right to abortion embodied within the Privacy Clause, Planned Parenthood cannot overcome the presumption of constitutionality and is unable to demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the 15-week ban is unconstitutional,” Justice Jamie R. Grosshans wrote in the majority opinion.

In paving the way for the six-week ban, the court cemented the rapid transformation of Florida, once a destination for women seeking abortions in the American South, into a place with restrictive policies akin to those in surrounding states.

But allowing the ballot measure

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Trump Rallies Are Evolving Into a Church

By MICHAEL C. BENDER

CONWAY, S.C. — Long known for his improvised and volatile stage performances, former President Donald J. Trump now tends to finish his rallies on a solemn note.

Soft, reflective music fills the venue as a hush falls over the crowd. Mr. Trump’s tone turns reverent and somber, prompting some supporters to bow their heads or close their eyes. Others raise open palms in the air or murmur as if in prayer.

In this moment, Mr. Trump’s audience is his congregation, and the former president their pastor as he delivers a roughly 15-minute finale that evokes an evangelical altar call, the emotional tradition that concludes some Christian services in which attendees come forward to commit to their savior.

“The great silent majority is rising like never before and under our leadership,” he recites from a teleprompter in a typical version of the script. “We will pray to God for our strength and for our liberty. We will pray for God and we

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Future Meets Past as a Greener Europe Turns to Rivers for Freight

By LIZ ALDERMAN

PARIS — As pale morning light flickered across the Seine, Capt. Freddy Badar steered his hulking river barge, Le Bosphore, past picturesque Normandy villages and snow-fringed woodlands, setting a course for Paris.

Onboard were containers packed with furniture, electronics and clothing loaded the night before from a cargo ship that had docked in Le Havre, the seaport in northern France. Had the cargo continued by road, 120 trucks would have clogged the highways. Using Le Bosphore and its crew of four prevented tons of carbon emissions from entering the atmosphere.

“The river is part of a wider solution for cleaner transport and the environment,” Captain Badar said, his eyes scanning other vessels carrying wares up and down the Seine. “But there’s much more that we could be doing.”

As the European Union steps up its battle against climate change, it needs to decarbonize freight transport, responsible for a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions.

To get there, it is turning back to a centuries-old solution: its rivers. With 23,000 miles of waterways spanning the European Union, officials see a huge potential to help take trucks — the biggest source of freight emissions — off roads. The European Green Deal, the European Union’s decarbonization blueprint, would turn rivers into highways and double barge traffic by 2050.

There’s a lot of room for improvement. Today, rivers carry less than 2 percent of Europe’s freight. By comparison, around 6.5 million trucks crisscross Europe’s roads, accounting for 80 percent of freight transport. Rail accounts for around 5 percent.

If rivers are to handle more traffic, much of Europe’s decades-old waterway infrastructure, including ports and locks, will need upgrading. A warming planet adds to the challenge: Droughts in recent years have grounded some transport on the Rhine, and pose risks to the Seine.

While the Seine isn’t the most heavily trafficked river in Europe — that is the Rhine, which flows through Germany and the Netherlands — the ambition is to turn it into one of the main experimental hubs for the climate transition.

“We are working on a transformation to get businesses to massively shift their logistics routes,” said Stéphane Raisson, the presi-

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A barge on the Seine in France. Officials hope rivers will be the new highways, reducing emissions.

Economy in India Under Modi Is Growing, but So Is Inequality

By ALEX TRAVELLI

NEW DELHI — As Narendra Modi was storming to victory in the election of 2014, he said that “aachhe din aane waale hain” — good times are coming.

Now as Mr. Modi stands set to secure another term as prime minister in elections starting on April 19, the value of India’s stock market has grown threefold since he first took office. India’s economy is almost twice as big as it was.

Stocks have risen so much because the number of Indians with enough wealth and appetite for investment risk has jumped — to nearly 5 percent of the population from barely 2 percent.

But the economic gains have been widely unequal. The bulk of India’s growth depends on those at the top of the income ladder, in-

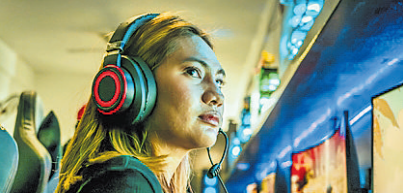


Prime Minister Narendra Modi controls all levers of power.

cluding a coterie of huge and tightly controlled businesses.

Ninety percent of India’s population of 1.4 billion are estimated to subsist on less than \$3,500 a year. Yet in the poorest rural districts, life has been made more bearable by welfare programs that have expanded under Mr. Modi. Many of

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What Crypto Meltdown?

The cryptocurrency market has come roaring back in the Philippines, two years after a spectacular crash. PAGE B1

A Tech Skeptic Rethinks A.I.

An M.I.T. economist and tech contrarian argues that artificial intelligence could benefit the middle class. PAGE B1

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Ireland Recovering Its History

A globe-spanning research project has turned the catalog of a public archive destroyed in Ireland’s civil war into a model for reconstruction. PAGE A7

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Lin Qi, a billionaire who helped produce the science-fiction hit, was poisoned by a disgruntled executive. PAGE A7

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Bringing Baseball to Brazil

Once a semiprofessional player in Japan, Yukihiro Shimura has now become a missionary. PAGE B6

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A Push for Defamation Cases

Lawyers are increasingly deploying one of the oldest areas of the law to counter the tide of political disinformation in the social media era. PAGE A10

Trump Secures Bond

The \$175 million deal spares the former president from paying a judgment in his civil fraud case as he appeals. PAGE A18

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A Hollywood Voice for Women

Paula Weinstein followed her mother’s path into movies and television, advocacy and action. She was 78. PAGE A20



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A Celestial Showstopper

Our writers have all the answers about the coming solar eclipse, and on what scientists, and the animal kingdom, will be up to when it arrives. PAGE D1

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Zeynep Tufekci

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Telling All About the Beatles

At 87, Peter Brown, a polarizing figure in the band’s history, is releasing a new book of interviews conducted in 1980 and 1981 with members of the group and the people near to them. PAGE C1

Pitfalls of ‘The People’s Joker’

The filmmaker Vera Drew used the Batman villain to tell a trans coming-of-age story. But then Warner Bros. decided to make itself heard. PAGE C6

