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Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024 • \$3

Biden looks to counter critics with asylum cap

As election approaches, president takes aim at illegal border crossings

BY NICK MIROFF
AND MARIA SACCHETTI

President Biden announced new measures Tuesday that will block migrants' access to the U.S. asylum system when illegal border crossings are at emergency levels, a move aimed at shoring up one of his biggest vulnerabilities to reelection in November.

"We must face the simple truth: To protect America as a land that welcomes immigrants, we must first secure the border and secure it now," Biden said in prepared remarks at the White House. "If the United States doesn't secure our border, there's no limit to the number of people who may try to come here."

Biden's executive actions, effective at the end of the day Tuesday, impose broad restrictions on asylum as long as illegal border crossings remain above an average of 2,500 per day, administration officials said.

Migrants ineligible for protection will be returned to their home countries or Mexico unless they express a convincing fear of persecution that would qualify them for an exemption under tougher screening procedures, administration officials said.

The move follows years of record levels of illegal crossings and blistering Republican attacks on the president's record.

SEE BORDER ON A8

Caucus divided: Some Democrats say restriction goes too far. **A8**

Conflating abortion and birth control

Far-right conservatives' mislabeling could imperil access to contraception

BY LAUREN WEBER

Republican lawmakers in Missouri blocked a bill to widen access to birth-control pills by falsely claiming they induce abortions. An antiabortion group in Louisiana killed legislation to enshrine a right to birth control by inaccurately equating emergency contraception with abortion drugs. An Idaho think tank focused on "biblical activism" is pushing state legislators to ban access to emergency contraception and intrauterine devices (IUDs) by mislabeling them as "abortifacients."

Since the Supreme Court overturned the right to abortion two years ago, far-right conservatives have been trying to curtail birth-control access by sowing misinformation about how various methods work to prevent pregnancy, even as Republican leaders scramble to reassure voters they have no intention of restricting the right to contraception, which

SEE BIRTH CONTROL ON A17

Abortion pills: Supreme Court ruling may not end legal battle. **A3**



SIRACHAI ARUNRUGTICHAJ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Two cousins, ages 21 and 22, who recently fled Myanmar together after it implemented military conscription, are shown at a safe house in Mahachai, Thailand. The pair said they hid in rubber plantations before being picked up by smugglers on motorcycles.

Young men flee Myanmar in panic after struggling military starts draft

Tens of thousands have left for Thailand since junta government, facing losses to ethnic rebel groups, announced conscription

BY REBECCA TAN
IN SANGKHLA BURI, THAILAND

Six pickup trucks jammed with migrants from Myanmar sped through a border town in western Thailand just after dawn.

Lin Soe, 18, was in the second truck, part of an exodus of boys and men fleeing Myanmar because its military junta had begun conscripting soldiers in the face of mounting rebel successes. He had long resisted leaving his country, but his mother had finally told him it was time to go, he said, recounting his story.

Tens of thousands of young people have been fleeing Myanmar every month since the junta in February announced that for the first time it was instituting a draft, according to migration researchers and aid groups.

Stung by a string of battlefield

losses to pro-democracy insurgents and ethnic rebel groups, the military is now looking to add as many as 60,000 soldiers within a year. The decision, say security analysts, reflects mounting anxiety within the military, which is confronting its biggest challenge since it ousted a democratically elected government three years ago and triggered a civil war.

Panic has gripped families even in urban centers like Yangon that had been largely spared the airstrikes and battlefield clashes that have pounded more remote areas. Young fathers have disappeared from their homes overnight. Mothers have packed up their teenage sons and sent them away. In parts of the country,

SEE MYANMAR ON A11

FDA panel rejects ecstasy as treatment for PTSD

BY DANIEL GILBERT
AND DAVID OVALLE

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory committee overwhelmingly voted Tuesday that evidence is lacking that MDMA-assisted therapy is effective for treating post-traumatic stress disorder and that the benefits don't outweigh the risks to patients, dealing a potential blow to what could be the first psychedelic treatment the agency approves.

Recommendation is nonbinding but could deal a blow to approval

The advisory committee is made up of independent mental health and medical experts, and its vote is not binding. Still, its recommendation could hold great weight as the FDA decides for the first time whether the

mind-altering compound — better known by its street name, ecstasy, and long categorized among the riskiest of controlled substances — can be legally used as a medical treatment in the United States.

During the all-day meeting, committee members praised the promise of the drug but struggled with gaps in the research data, potential for abuse of MDMA and how the psychotherapy, which is not regulated by the FDA, would be incorporated into

the drug's approval.

"The therapy itself is still, I would consider, experimental," said Paul Holtzheimer, deputy director for research at the National Center for PTSD, who voted against approval.

The sponsor of the MDMA treatment, Lykos Therapeutics, conducted two late-stage clinical trials showing that patients treated with the drug experienced a significant improvement in their PTSD symptoms relative

SEE FDA ON A16



MONEY SHARMA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been the dominant force in Indian politics for a decade.

In the run-up to this year's

SEE INDIA ON A10

California builds world's largest wildlife bridge to bypass highway death trap

BY REIS THEBAULT



DAMIAN DOVGARGANES/AP

Ouag Ghribi of Paris photographs Chiara Rode, 2, with a mural of mountain lion P-22 in Los Angeles in 2022. After P-22's death that year, due in part to a car strike, he became the poster cat for the bridge project.

AGOURA HILLS, CALIF. — The 10-lane freeway that slices through this part of Southern California is one of the busiest in the country, ushering more than 300,000 cars across the greater Los Angeles area every day.

For drivers, it's a nightmare: This stretch of Highway 101 is known as the "highway from hell," the infamous host of the nation's worst commutes.

But if the 101 is bothersome for bipeds, it is downright disastrous for the wildlife that also calls the region home. The 101 cuts like a chain saw through a vibrant natural ecosystem of coastal sage scrub and oak trees interspersed with suburban neighborhoods, disrupting the movement of animals and threatening their survival.

Now a massive infrastructure project is underway to suture together the vast tracts of fragmented wildlife habitat that have been separated by the highway for decades. Construction on a key phase of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing — a \$100 million structure funded by a mix of public and private money — began in April and is expected to open in early 2026.

The bridge will be the largest of its kind in the world, spanning the highway at roughly the size of a football field, and it will reconnect the undeveloped sections of the Santa Monica Mountains with those of the Simi

SEE BRIDGE ON A7

IN THE NEWS

2020 electors plot Wisconsin's attorney general filed conspiracy charges against a former aide and two attorneys who advised Donald Trump on a post-election strategy. **A5**

D.C. voters stay course Incumbent council members survived challenges in the primary election, with Ward 7 too close to call. **B1**

THE NATION
Merrick Garland defended the Justice Department in a grilling by House Republicans. **A3**
Testimony began in Hunter Biden's trial on federal gun charges in Delaware. **A4**

THE WORLD
As rebellions spread, Benjamin Netanyahu tries to keep his government together. **A9**
President Biden said he was "uncertain" whether Israel was committing war crimes. **A10**

THE ECONOMY
A news site editor's ties to Russia and Iran show the complexity of misinformation. **A12**
The European Central Bank is almost certain to lower its benchmark interest rate for the first time in nearly five years, cutting rates sooner than the Federal Reserve. **A15**

THE REGION
A woman was charged with carjacking after police said she crashed a stolen vehicle in D.C., killing its occupant. **B1**
Police in Maryland are investigating two cases in which children accidentally shot themselves within a 48-hour span. **B1**

SPORTS
A San Diego Padres infielder is banned for life after betting on baseball, a first since Pete Rose in 1989. **D5**

FOOD
Rollen Chalmers, a Black rice farmer in South Carolina, has been integral to a heritage-grains revival. **E1**

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