



Google goes to bat in California

Company fights state bill that would have Big Tech pay news publishers

BY GERRIT DE VYNCK AND LAURA WAGNER

SAN FRANCISCO — For years, governments around the world have waged a bitter fight with Google and Meta over whether the Big Tech giants should pay for the news stories and videos that show up in search results and on social media. Now that fight has come to their home turf — the United States.

California politicians are advancing a bill that would force Google and Meta — which owns Facebook and Instagram — to pay news publishers each time they display pieces of their articles or show links to them in search results or on social media. The companies are lobbying furiously to block it, saying the law would enact a “link tax” and upend the free flow of information online.

Now, Google is taking its resistance a step further, by completely blocking news links for California-based news organizations from showing up in search results for some Californians. Google won’t say how many people it is blocking news for, but called the move a “short-term test” in a blog post announcing it earlier this month.

Politicians and news publishers have shot back. “This is a dangerous threat by Google” that is “clearly an abuse of power and

SEE GOOGLE ON A2

Organizers prepare aid flotilla for Gaza

Plan is for ships to sail from Turkey in challenge to Israeli naval blockade

BY KAREEM FAHIM AND BERIL ESKI

ISTANBUL — A flotilla of ships bound for the Gaza Strip is preparing to sail from Turkey in the coming days, organizers say, on a mission aimed at breaching Israel’s naval blockade and highlighting the lack of aid reaching Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

The organizers, gathered under the banner of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, have participated in similar missions for years, an effort that gained worldwide attention in 2010 after an Israeli raid on a flotilla that included a Turkish ship, the Mavi Marmara, killed 10 people and sparked a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel.

But the flotilla’s well-traveled route — the Mediterranean — has gained new relevance during the current conflict as governments and relief organizations alike turn to sea deliveries to circumvent what aid groups say is Israel’s persistent obstruction of deliveries to Gaza over land.

SEE GAZA ON A14



PHOTOS BY JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Years of toxic water afflicts N.M. city

After repeat issues with arsenic in supply, the state has stepped in to aid majority-Latino town

BY SILVIA FOSTER-FRAU IN SUNLAND PARK, N.M.

Rosana Monge clutched her husband’s death certificate and an envelope of his medical records as she approached the microphone and faced members of the water utility board on a recent Monday in this city in southern New Mexico.

“I have proof here of arsenic tests — positive on him, that were done by the Veterans Administration,” she testified about her husband, whose 2023 records show he had been diagnosed with “exposure to arsenic” before his death in February at age 79. “What I’m asking is for a health assessment of the community.”

State and federal records show that in each of the last 16 years, drinking water samples tested in this 17,400-person town near the Texas border has contained illegal levels of arsenic, including in 2016, when levels reached five times the legal limit.

Naturally occurring in the soil in New Mexico, arsenic seeps into the groundwater used for drinking. In water, arsenic has no taste, odor or color — but can be removed with treatment. Over time, it can cause a



variety of health problems, including cancer, diabetes and heart disease, endangering the lives of people in this low-income and overwhelmingly Latino community.

The Environmental Protection Agency has assessed Sunland Park’s water operator, the Camino Real Regional Utility Authority (CRRUA), with 120 “violation points” over the last five years, a calculation based both on the number of times the utility has violated federal standards and the level of seriousness of the violations.

For utilities serving at least 10,000 people that recently had a health-related violation, the tally was second only to the 182 points collected by Jackson, Miss., where problems with the drinking water earned national attention in 2022. Sunland Park has even more issues the EPA considers unresolved than Jackson.

Anne Nigra, a professor at Columbia University who focuses on the effects of arsenic-laden water on Latino communities and reviewed the utility’s federally mandated water reports, called the situation in the

SEE ARSENIC ON A10

Venezuelans transform D.C.’s food delivery scene

Many of the recent arrivals using mopeds are among the nearly 8 million people who have fled since 2014

BY MARÍA LUISA PAÚL AND MARISA IATÍ

It’s 4 p.m., and the corner of 14th and Irving streets NW in D.C. brims with activity. Vendors fervently tout their offerings — “mango, mango, mango fresco” and “tenemos tacos” — against a din of hip-hop, the occasional siren and a preacher’s voice booming through a loudspeaker.

Nearby, some 20 moped drivers sit parked in a line, wedged behind a bike lane and stalls selling coconuts and Ethiopian barbecue. Some sip Chick-fil-A milkshakes or listen to music as they wait for their phones to ping: the welcome sound of a hungry customer ordering delivery.

The drivers have become a fixture on this corner in Columbia Heights, part of a new wave of Venezuelan immigrants who have entered the capital’s food delivery industry and filled the city’s streets with mopeds. Many are among the nearly 8 million people who have fled Venezuela since 2014, as the country faces a

SEE MOPEDS ON A8



SARAH L. VOISIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Moped delivery drivers, many of them Venezuelan, in Columbia Heights. As immigrants pursue the long process of claiming asylum and applying for work permits, many stay afloat by delivering food.

House speaker’s shift on Ukraine

FROM ISOLATIONIST TO AID SUPPORTER

Briefings, faith steered Johnson to advance bill

BY LEIGH ANN CALDWELL AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

When the House passed a \$40 billion emergency funding bill for Ukraine in May 2022, support for Ukraine was largely still a bipartisan issue. But a little-known conservative congressman from Louisiana was one of the 57 Republicans to oppose it.

Now, just six months after his unlikely elevation to speaker of the House, Mike Johnson (R-La.) has pushed through a \$60 billion effort to bolster Ukraine’s arsenal, along with funding for Israel and the Indo-Pacific.

The move marks a major victory and dramatic turnaround for the speaker, who is trying to gain control of a bitterly divided Republican conference. The far right is fiercely against Ukraine aid — 112 Republicans, just over half of the conference, opposed it on the House floor Saturday, and Johnson had to rely on unanimous Democratic backing — and Johnson’s decision to greenlight a floor vote could come at great political cost. He could very well lose his job as speaker over it.

It is also a major rebuke to former president Donald Trump, who publicly backed Johnson at a

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Zelensky: He calls for fast delivery of arms before Russian attack. A16

For Trump, a jury pool becomes a focus group

Potential panelists in his hush money trial spoke, and he had to listen

BY DAVID NAKAMURA AND JOSH DAWSEY

NEW YORK — The retired police photographer in the jury pool on the second day of Donald Trump’s criminal trial was visibly nervous, at times meandering in his answers. But when a defense attorney asked if he had a strong opinion of Trump, the man offered an immediate response.

“Oh, boy, here we go,” the man said. “Going back to Central Park, I knew some of the kids, their cousins.”

The reference had nothing to do with Trump’s divisive presidency. The man, who is Black, was instead alluding to a shocking 1989 New York City rape case. Shortly after five Black and Latino teenagers were arrested and identified as suspects in the brutal assault on a jogger, Trump paid for full-page newspaper ads calling for New York to reinstate the death penalty. The five teens were fully exonerated years later, but Trump has repeatedly suggested he still believes they were guilty.

The jury selection process for

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Carbon footprint The Olympics are usually a sustainability disaster, but organizers of the Games in Paris have pledged that this year will be different. Can they deliver? A12

War in Gaza Benjamin Netanyahu thanked the U.S. House for passing a foreign aid bill and vowed to escalate Israel’s fight. A14

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A crowded field is vying to succeed longtime D.C. Council member Vincent C. Gray (D) in a redrawn Ward 7. B1
Many Prince George’s County public schools will shift their starting and ending times next academic year, and bus changes are on the way as well. B1

STYLE Taylor Swift’s sprawling new double album feels miserable and bottomless, Chris Richards writes. C1

SPORTS The Capitals’ playoff run starts with a physical 4-1 loss to the top-seeded Rangers at Madison Square Garden. D1

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