



Partly sunny 76/57 • Tomorrow: Mostly sunny 76/57 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

THURSDAY, MAY 30, 2024 • \$3

## Alito says he will not recuse in Jan. 6 cases

Justice claims wife flew flags embraced by rioters without his knowledge

BY ANN E. MARIMOW AND JUSTIN JOUVENAL

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. on Wednesday rejected calls to recuse himself from Jan. 6-related cases at the Supreme Court after Democratic lawmakers questioned whether he could avoid the appearance of bias following reports that an upside-down flag flew at his home in the weeks after the attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021.

In a letter to Democratic leaders in the House and Senate, Alito said that flag and a second, religious-themed flag also embraced by Jan. 6 rioters were flown by his wife without his knowledge, and that the incidents do not meet the conditions for recusal outlined in the Supreme Court's code of conduct.

Alito disclosed for the first time that he was not aware of the upside-down flag outside his home in the Alexandria section of Fairfax County until it was called to his attention and that his wife initially resisted taking it down.

"As soon as I saw it, I asked my wife to take it down, but for several days, she refused," Alito wrote in the letter to Sens. Dick Durbin (Ill.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.), who oversee the federal courts in their respective roles as chairmen of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a judicial oversight subcommittee.

"My wife is fond of flying flags. I am not," he added, "My wife was solely responsible for having flagpoles put up at our residence and our vacation home and has flown a wide variety of flags over the years."

The upside-down flag — long used as a sign of distress, especially by the U.S. military — has become a symbol of the "Stop the Steal" movement that falsely

SEE ALITO ON A2

## D.C. grocers step up their battle against shoplifting

BY JENNY GATHRIGHT AND PETER HERMANN

Giant Food stores in D.C. launched a ban on large bags. Harris Teeter employees check customer receipts at exits across the District. And at some local Safeway markets, departing customers now face an electronic gate that prevents people from leaving without a receipt.

The measures deployed in recent months mark an escalation of retailers' efforts to tamp down property crime — a stubborn challenge that has eluded solutions nationwide. While clear data on shoplifting in D.C. is not available, viral videos of people walking out of stores with armfuls and carts of merchandise have unsettled some residents, adding to a perceived sense of lawlessness in the District, even as crime — including theft — is trending down overall from last year.

In statements acknowledging

SEE GROCERS ON A5

## Deliberations begin in Trump hush money trial



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Former president Donald Trump in New York on Wednesday, when jurors began deliberating whether he's guilty of 34 felony counts.

### JURY ASKS TO REHEAR PARTS OF TESTIMONY

After several hours, first day ends without decision

BY DEVLIN BARRETT, SHAYNA JACOBS, DEREK HAWKINS AND ISAAC ARNSDORF

NEW YORK — The jury in Donald Trump's hush money trial deliberated for several hours Wednesday in the first criminal case against a former U.S. president, weighing a momentous decision that could brand the presumptive GOP presidential nominee as a felon just five months before Election Day.

"You are the judges of the

facts, and you are responsible for deciding whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty," New York Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan said while giving the jurors their final legal instructions. The panel was dismissed in the late afternoon and will return to the task Thursday morning.

The judge emphasized that the verdict is solely theirs to make and that they should not take anything he has said or done from the bench as suggestive of whether Trump should be found guilty of 34 counts of falsifying

business records related to a hush money payment to an adult-film actress ahead of the 2016 election.

The jurors began deliberating shortly before noon. Around 3 p.m., they sent out a note asking to rehear testimony that had been presented during the trial on four distinct topics, which suggested they were focused on Trump's alleged involvement and knowledge of the scheme.

Three of the jury requests were for certain pieces of testimony from David Pecker, a friend of Trump's and the former chief

SEE TRUMP ON A7

**Verdict:** To convict, jury must agree on guilt — not underlying crimes. **A8**

## Israel used U.S.-made bomb in Rafah strike, experts say



EYAD BABA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Palestinians on Monday inspect the site of an Israeli strike on an encampment in the southern Gaza Strip that killed at least 45 people the night before. Four weapons experts who reviewed visual evidence said the Israeli military used a U.S.-made precision bomb in the attack on the camp, where a fire then broke out. **Story, A12**

## Israel says it controls Gaza-Egypt buffer zone

BY ADELA SULIMAN, HEBE FAROUK MAHFOUZ, JOHN HUDSON AND SUSANNAH GEORGE

Israel said Wednesday it had achieved "tactical control" over the boundary that separates Gaza and Egypt, a significant success for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has repeatedly described control of the area as an objective for Israel in Gaza.

Shutdown of tunnels that resupply Hamas is a key Netanyahu goal

An official with the Israel Defense Forces, speaking on the condition of anonymity to brief reporters, said that while Israel does not have "boots on the ground" throughout the bound-

ary, known as the Philadelphia corridor, its control means Israel can "cut off" Hamas supplies via underground tunnels in the corridor.

"It means we have the ability to cut off the oxygen line that Hamas has used for replenishing and movement in and around that area," the official said, adding that about 20 cross-border tunnels had been found in the area.

The IDF announcement

came amid intensifying international condemnation of Israel's ongoing offensive in Rafah, just north of the Philadelphia corridor, after a strike at a tent camp on Sunday killed at least 45, and amid no sign of an end to fighting. A senior Israeli official said Wednesday that the war in Gaza could last the rest of this year, prompting U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to say there was an urgent

SEE GAZA ON A12

## For an elated D.C., dawn of new panda era

Zoo officials hope bears will someday produce offspring of their own

BY MICHAEL E. RUANE AND OLIVIA DIAZ

Giant pandas are coming back to Washington.

The Smithsonian's National Zoo announced Wednesday that two new giant pandas — Bao Li, 2, a male, and Qing Bao, 2, a female — will be arriving from China later this year.

Bao Li has family roots in the District.

He is the son of Bao Bao, a female giant panda who was born at the zoo in 2013, and the grandson of Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, the panda couple whose departure from the zoo last year broke hearts and signaled the end of an era.

But now comes a new era and a chance for fresh generations of zoo visitors to experience the thrill of panda mania and the hope that the new bears will

someday produce cubs.

"I am filled with such joy right now," said Brandie Smith, the zoo's director. "It's hard to express it."

"The program is so important to giant pandas," she said in a telephone interview last week. "We are working to save an endangered species."

Smith said giant pandas have drawn millions of visitors to D.C.,

SEE PANDAS ON A6



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA PADILLA CASTELLANOS/THE WASHINGTON POST; SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Two-year-olds Bao Li, left, a grandson of the panda couple that recently left the zoo, and female Qing Bao will arrive this year.

### IN THE NEWS

**Concern over Ukraine's strikes** The United States fears that drone attacks targeting Russian nuclear early-warning systems could disrupt strategic stability. **A8**

**Little love for 'Commanders'** Most D.C.-area sports fans say they either dislike or hate the NFL team's nickname, a poll found. **D1**

**THE NATION**  
**An unusually severe** start to tornado season has left at least three dozen people dead. **A2**  
**Maurie McInnis**, a cultural historian, was named Yale University's next president. **A3**

**THE WORLD**  
**After severe flooding** in southern Brazil, many say of home: "I'm not returning." **A10**  
**North Korea** has been floating balloons toward the South carrying all manner of refuse. **A11**

**THE ECONOMY**  
**In a natural disaster**, your home insurance may fall short. Here are some ways to protect yourself. **A13**  
**An issue** with the transfer of accounts between student loan servicers is hurting some borrowers' credit scores and can take months to fix. **A14**

**THE REGION**  
**The D.C. Council** gave its initial approval to a \$21 billion budget for fiscal 2025 that includes tax hikes and the reversal of some cuts. **B1**  
**A record number** of tourists — nearly 26 million — visited D.C. in 2023, according to a new report. **B1**

**SPORTS**  
**The Wizards** hired Brian Keefe, who had been in the role in an interim capacity since January, as their head coach. **D1**

**LOCAL LIVING**  
**Real estate agents** dish on the myriad ways that open houses can go very wrong, from the gross to the dangerous.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13  
COMICS.....C6  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
OPINION PAGES.....A15  
TELEVISION.....C3  
WORLD NEWS.....A10

CONTENT © 2024  
The Washington Post  
Year 147, No. 53867

