

'Historic moment'

US Supreme Court gets first Black woman judge

REUTERS, Washington

Ketanji Brown Jackson was confirmed by the Senate on Thursday as the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court in a milestone for the United States and a victory for President Joe Biden, who made good on a campaign promise as he seeks to infuse the federal judiciary with a broader range of backgrounds.

The vote to confirm the 51-year-old federal appellate judge to a lifetime job on the nation's top judicial body was 53-47, with three Republicans - Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski and Mitt Romney - joining Biden's fellow Democrats.

Jackson will take the 83-year-old Breyer's place on the liberal bloc of a court with an increasingly assertive 6-3 conservative majority. Breyer is due to serve until the court's current term ends - usually in late June - and Jackson would be formally sworn in after that.

Biden hosted Jackson at the White House to watch the vote on television, posting on Twitter a selfie he took of them smiling after Senate acted.

"Judge Jackson's confirmation was a historic moment for our nation. We've taken another step toward making our highest court reflect the diversity of America," Biden wrote on Twitter.

Of the 115 people who have served on the Supreme Court since its 1789 founding, all but three have been white. It has had two Black justices, both men.

Jackson will become the sixth woman justice ever. For the first time, four women will serve on the court together.



Ukrainian service men and emergency personnel tend to victims in the aftermath of a rocket attack on a railway station in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, in the Donbass region, yesterday. At least 50 people were killed and 87 wounded in the attack on the station that was packed with women, children and elderly trying to flee fighting, Ukrainian authorities said.

PHOTO: AFP

Global methane emission soars to record levels

REUTERS, Washington

Global levels of the potent greenhouse gas methane rose to a record high for a second consecutive year in 2021, according to data released by NOAA on Thursday, hitting the highest levels since scientists began measuring these emissions nearly four decades ago.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists observed a record annual increase in atmospheric levels of methane, the second most prevalent greenhouse gas after carbon dioxide, of 17 parts per billion (ppb). Fossil fuel production and use contributes nearly one-third of total methane emissions.

The data underscores how significantly methane has been underestimated by governments and comes after over 100 countries have agreed to collectively slash emissions of the gas by 30 percent by the end of the decade.

The report showed that levels of carbon dioxide also continued to increase rapidly, with the global surface average for carbon dioxide during 2021 at 414.7 parts per million (ppm), an increase of 2.66 ppm over the 2020 average.

Take action or face NO-TRUST VOTE

Lanka opposition threatens govt; business leaders warn of more troubles, say export may fall another 20-30pc

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's main opposition party yesterday asked the government to take effective action to resolve an economic crisis or face a no-confidence motion, as business leaders from garments, tea and other industries warned exports could fall 20-30 percent this year.

The heavily indebted country has little money left to pay for imports, which has led to crippling shortages of fuel, power, food, and increasingly, medicine. Street protests have gone on nearly non-stop for more than a month, despite a five-day state of emergency and a two-day curfew.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is running his administration with only a handful of ministers after his entire cabinet resigned this week, while opposition and even some coalition partners rejected calls for a unity government to deal with the country's worst crisis in decades.

At least 41 lawmakers have walked out of the ruling coalition to become independents, though the government says it still has a majority in parliament.

"The government needs to address the financial crisis and work to improve governance, or we will move a no-confidence motion against the government," Sajith Premadasa, the leader of Samagi Jana Balawegaya, said in parliament.

"It is imperative that Sri Lanka must avoid a disorderly debt default. The government must

work to suspend debt and appoint financial advisers to start off the process of restructuring debt."

Nearly two dozen associations, representing industries that collectively employ a fifth of the country's 22 million people, together urged the government to quickly seek financial help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the ADB.

"We need a solution within weeks or the country will fall off the precipice," Rohan Masakorala, director general of the Sri Lanka Association of

Manufacturers And Exporters of Rubber Products, told a news conference. "Our estimate is that both merchandise and service exports could drop 20-30% this year due to a dollar shortage, higher freight costs and power cuts."

Rajapaksa is struggling to find a new finance minister to hold talks this month with the IMF for emergency loans, after Ali Sabry submitted his resignation on Tuesday with just a day in office.

Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves have plunged some 70 percent in the past two years, hitting \$1.93 billion at the end of March. It has a debt of \$1 billion due for payment in July, and more later this year. Inflation, meanwhile, has rocketed to its highest level in more than a decade, and on Friday evening, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka is expected to raise key interest rates by as much as 400 basis points (bps) following a 100 bps rise in early March.



Pink Floyd release new song for Ukraine

AFP, Paris

Pink Floyd have written their first new song in almost 30 years to support Ukrainians, the band announced on Thursday.

"Hey, Hey, Rise-Up!" was scheduled to be released yesterday.

It samples Andriy Khlyvnyuk, from one of Ukraine's biggest bands BoomBox, singing in Sofiyskaya Square in Kyiv in a clip that went viral. Khlyvnyuk abandoned a world tour to return to Ukraine and help defend his country.

In a press release, band leader David Gilmour said he had been moved by Khlyvnyuk's video: "It was a powerful moment that made me want to put it to music."

He was able to speak with Khlyvnyuk from his hospital bed in Kyiv, where the singer was recovering after being hit by shrapnel in a mortar attack, the record company said.

He said he intends to work with Khlyvnyuk in the future when opportunity comes by.

It is the first original music from Pink Floyd since 1994's "The Division Bell".

WWII bomb kills man in Czech city

AFP, Prague

A World War II era bomb went off early yesterday in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava during excavation work, killing a man and injuring another, police and media reports said. "We can confirm the explosion was caused by World War II ammunition," police said on Twitter. Local media said a 49-year-old man died while another man suffered a light head injury. Police evacuated about 50 people from houses within 300 metres (yards) from the site. World War II ammunition is often found in the northeastern Czech Republic through which the Red Army advanced in the spring of 1945.

Palestinian suspect killed after Tel Aviv bar attack

REUTERS, Jerusalem



Israeli security forces yesterday shot dead a Palestinian who killed two people in a Tel Aviv bar after an hours-long manhunt through the city.

The bar attack was the latest in a string of deadly street assaults that have killed 13 people and shaken the country. Late on Thursday, at the start of the weekend in Israel, the attacker entered a pub on a crowded main street of Tel Aviv and began shooting, killing two people and seriously wounding three before fleeing.

UNO faces

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last year, falsely claiming in documents that she had to go there for treatment.

During their 12-day stay at a rented house in the Indian city, she learnt that Manjur had a wife and two children, it added.

Instead of marrying her, Manjur later threatened to kill her and forcibly deleted her photos, messages, and other data from her phone in an attempt to destroy the evidence that could prove his relationship with the woman.

This correspondent could not reach Manjur who didn't answer the phone.

Ataul Gani, deputy commissioner in Tangail, told The Daily Star that Sohana Nasrin, an additional deputy commissioner, was investigating the matter.

"The investigation report will be submitted to the authorities concerned by the next three to four work days," he added.

Russian strike

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vessels as part of a "very substantial" new round of sanctions that also includes an export ban and new measures against Russian banks.

Taijul, Khaled pull things back

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Pacer Khaled, who bowled well in the first Test, gave the breakthrough for the Tigers as the seamer got the outside edge of left-hander Erwee, on 24, with Liton Das completing a sharp catch by diving towards his left.

Rain had interrupted the second session, which saw the hosts score 92 runs and lose two wickets, for about half an hour, impacting the

Errant bus

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Paribahan stopping on the main road near C&B Bus stand within five minutes.

Most drivers and their helpers had no idea why the service lane there was built.

As this correspondent asked a driver of D-Link Paribahan why he stopped the bus on the main road, he said, "This road is for local buses and the other one [service lane] is for cars."

Contacted, Mohammed Shamim Al Mamun, executive engineer of RHD (Dhaka division), said they were building structures under the project and that it was the duty of the police and the local administration to ensure

timings of day's play.

Taijul kept the Tigers in hunt as the experienced left arm spinner bowled the most number of overs in the innings and ultimately was rewarded for his patience and hard work. Taijul first removed Elgar, caught behind after the hosts' skipper scored an impressive 89-ball 70 by striking ten fours, to break the 81-run second-

wicket stand. The 30-year-old picked up his second wicket when he trapped Keegan Peterson leg before for 64 with a review.

Taijul dismissed Ryan Rickelton, who scored 42, in the final hour of the day with a review while Khaled went on to remove the dangerous Temba Bavuma for 67 runs and brought Bangladesh back in the game late in the day.

Asked about the three-wheelers, he said they impose fine on the vehicles on a regular basis.

Buses operating inside the capital and its suburbs are affiliated with Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association.

Contacted, its Organising Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said they were not aware of any malpractices.

"If the local administration and police seek our assistance, we are ready to provide them with it. We want discipline on roads," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"If needed, we will visit the spot and deliver necessary instructions on buses' operation," he also said.

Birds

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species' habitat and dietary differences can only tell us so much and there is much more to be learnt about the precise ecological and evolutionary factors promoting increased colourfulness in tropical species."

DU teachers

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Be a part of such activities." If such practices are not stopped, it will be difficult for anyone to teach in a classroom independently.

Meanwhile, eminent educationist Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal told the Voice of America that he was deeply saddened by the incident.

He recalled that he was a science teacher all his life and he was among the editors of the science books taught to students in class-X in Bangladesh.

"It gives me infinite sadness that a book which I edited or wrote could not answer the questions of the children, and the teacher had to go to jail," he said. "I just want to say one thing: teacher Hriday Mondal must be released with dignity. Or else, they should arrest me as well."

Pelosi tests positive for Covid

AFP, Washington

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, has tested positive for Covid-19, her spokesman said Thursday, making her the latest Washington power player to catch the virus.

The 82-year-old lawmaker from California, who is second in line to the presidency, is vaccinated and boosted and is currently asymptomatic, her spokesman Drew Hammill said on Twitter.

Pelosi, who attended two White House events this week with President Joe Biden, is among several high-profile Covid cases in the US capital.

Among those reporting a positive test Thursday were Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser, two senators - Maine Republican Susan Collins and Democrat Raphael Warnock of Georgia - and House Democrat Angie Craig of Minnesota.

At least two members of Biden's cabinet - Attorney General Merrick Garland, 69, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo,

50 - and several lawmakers tested positive for the coronavirus this week after attending a gala dinner in Washington last weekend. Collins also attended the event.

About half a dozen journalists and members of the White House staff who were at the dinner have also tested positive, according to press reports, along with Jamal Simmons, the communications director for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Although Simmons was a close contact, Harris maintained her public schedule and presided over Thursday's historic Senate vote confirming Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to sit on the US Supreme Court.

Pelosi did not attend the annual Gridiron Club dinner, which brings together top politicians, media figures, members of the diplomatic corps and business leaders for a night of comedy.

But the House speaker was at a bill signing event at the White House on Wednesday with Biden and another event there

on Tuesday with Biden and former president Barack Obama.

Most of the attendees at the White House events were maskless.

The White House said the 79-year-old Biden, who did not attend the Gridiron dinner, was not considered a "close contact" of Pelosi and they had only "brief interactions."

Biden tested negative for Covid on Wednesday evening and "will continue to be tested regularly," the White House said.

"The president wishes Speaker Pelosi a speedy recovery," it said.

Pelosi's spokesman tweeted that "the Speaker is fully vaccinated and boosted, and is thankful for the robust protection the vaccine has provided."

Pelosi cancelled a press conference planned for Thursday and her spokesman said a congressional visit to Asia she intended to lead has been postponed to a later date.

Pelosi will quarantine in line with the guidance of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, her spokesman said.