The Washington Times

PRICES MAY VARY OUTSIDE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AREA

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SHAPING POLICY: Trump's sweeping tariffs on imported foreign goods are based on a 1977 law has delegated much of Congress' power to the president. Supreme Court justices have questions.

SUPREME COURT

Doubt cast on Trump tariff power

Justices question whether Congress gave president its taxing pen

BY ALEX SWOYER AND TOM HOWELL JR.
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Trump's fondness for tariffs ran into serious skepticism Wednesday at the Supreme Court, where the justices questioned whether Congress had truly given the executive such an expansive power to slap duties on all foreign goods.

The Constitution grants Congress the power to raise taxes and impose customs duties, but Mr. Trump says a 1977 law has delegated much of that power to the president, and he is using it as leverage in trade negotiations.

Justices on both sides of the aisle questioned his assertion.

"It's a congressional power, not a presidential power, to tax. You want to say tariffs aren't taxes, but that's exactly what they are. They're generating money from American citizens," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor, a member of the liberal wing.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. pointed to another problem with the International Economic Emergency Powers Act that Mr. Trump is using: "The statute doesn't use the word 'tariffs,'" he said.

U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer said the law uses the term "regulate importation." He said that has to mean the power to impose tariffs.

"If you had asked the Founders, 'How do you regulate imports,' they would say, 'Of course, we tariff,'" Mr. Sauer said.

Justices are weighing a case brought by small, import-reliant businesses that have challenged Mr. Trump's global tariffs. The president said the tariffs are intended to produce better terms

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MIDDLE EAST

Saudi-backed Syria seeks U.S. legitimacy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WAR AND PEACE: Less than 12 months after ousting the Assad regime, Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa (left), backed by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will have a White House reception next week. Syria's transition from war has been declared complete.

Upcoming White House visits signal push for sanctions relief

BY JACOB WIRTSCHAFTER AND AHMAD QWEIDAR
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DAMASCUS, SYRIA | Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa's and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's back-to-back visits to the White House next week will mark more than diplomatic courtesies: They also will reflect direct coordination between Riyadh and Damascus to ease Syria's isolation and press Congress for sanctions relief.

The visits also will represent an extraordinary gamble. Less than a year ago, Mr. al-Sharaa led Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an Islamist militia with roots in Syria's al Qaeda affiliate, fighting in fatigues from rebel-held Idlib. Today, he governs from Damascus in a suit, pitches investment laws to financiers and seeks a role in the U.S.-led campaign against the Islamic State group.

No Syrian head of state has visited Washington in more than 80 years, and none has made the journey from jihadi commander to presidential reception in less than 12 months.

The transformation began in Riyadh. President Trump traveled to Saudi Arabia on May 10 and, according to U.S. special envoy Tom Barrack, told Arab leaders: "Give this man a chance."

That presidential blessing, delivered in Crown Prince Mohammed's presence, set the template for what followed: Saudi financing backing American diplomatic cover, with Riyadh driving the regional reintegration effort and Washington providing political legitimacy.

At the Manama Dialogue, an annual global security and geopolitical conference in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Mr. Barrack on Sunday declared Syria's transition complete.

"There is no Plan B for Syria, only integration," he told Gulf officials and diplomats. He quoted Mr. Trump's directive: Syria "moved from guerrilla warfare and fatigues to statesmanship

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ELECTIONS

Democrats' wins reveal ideological split within party

Voters act on economic angst

BY SETH MCLAUGHLIN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Democrats' sweep of the off-year elections this week gave the party renewed vigor for battling President Trump and confidence that the victories will serve as a springboard for the 2026 midterm races.

The results, Democrats said, reflect mounting voter anger with Mr. Trump and his agenda and validate their focus on economic issues, particularly rising costs, as a blueprint for the midterms.

"This was complete dominance by the Democrats throughout the country," Ken Martin, chair of the Democratic National Committee, told reporters Wednesday on a conference call. "The reality is this was a huge rejection of the Trump extremism and an embrace of the hopeful, positive message that Democrats are offering up to the American people — one that's focused on their concerns, focused on an economic agenda that gives them a sense that their lives are going to be better with Democrats in control."

At the same time, Zohran Mamdani's historic New York mayoral win as a socialist Democrat puts a spotlight on the tension within the party over how far left it will move.

Republicans combed through the results in search of what had

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► Democrats bolstered on shutdown by elections. A3

Mamdani's win puts Schumer in crosshairs

BY SETH MCLAUGHLIN AND KERRY PICKET
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW YORK | Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's resounding election win is giving Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer plenty to worry about.

His refusal to endorse Mr. Mamdani, a 34-year-old socialist Democrat, has ruffled feathers on the Democratic Party's left flank, especially the energized crowd that has been pushing for Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to take on Mr. Schumer in a 2028 primary.

Schumer

The congresswoman from the Bronx is the undisputed star of the left. She championed Mr. Mamdani's campaign, which captured more than half the vote on his way to becoming the city's first Muslim mayor.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

WATERED-DOWN FREEBIES: Hotels are finding that hidden fees help them stay afloat. Economist Pippa Malmgren has described sneakflation as "a clever way to raise prices hoping nobody notices."

ECONOMY

'Sneakflation' pinching consumer wallets

Companies slip in hidden fees, shrinking goods, streaming ads

BY SEAN SALAI
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Airlines have ended the policy of allowing one free checked bag. Restaurants are imposing service fees that are visible only when the check arrives. Streaming services such as Amazon Prime Video have started running ads without a price drop.

It's called "sneakflation," and consumer analysts warn that it's on the rise as more companies pass along inflation costs to consumers by adding hidden fees to goods and services.

"Sneakflation is an everyday erosion of value," said Alexander Ketter, a U.S. consumer expert at the discount website Coupons.com. "It's largely a business choice driven by difficult economic conditions."

Sneakflation has been around for decades, but analysts say it has intensified in hotels, airlines, restaurants, grocery stores and video streaming services over the past five years, as more companies offset rising labor costs, shipping fees, raw material expenses and Trump administration tariffs on imported goods.

Other common examples include airline fees for seat selections that once cost nothing, hotels' hidden "resort fees" for Wi-Fi and swimming pool access, and food brands' extra charges for "organic" products containing real ingredients that people once took for granted.

"Rising inflation and new tariffs have pushed companies to hide price increases in creative ways, and consumers are finally noticing," said Matthew A. Gilbert, a marketing instructor at Coastal Carolina University in South Carolina. "Social media has also made it easier to spot and share examples, turning a quiet trend into a visible problem."

Economist Pippa Malmgren, a former adviser to President

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