



Surgeon General defends COVID response, Page 2



Using a squirrel puppet to talk about mental health, Page 3



How wolves in Yellowstone National Park are faring, Page 3



Weaving together art, friendships, community, Page 4

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022 | NATION PLUS - A FORUM COMMUNICATIONS EXTRA

Biden says ‘action’ required

President continues push for voting rights bill as he honors King’s legacy

By Andrea Shalal
Reuters

President Joe Biden traveled to Philadelphia on Sunday to honor the legacy of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., as he continues to press for voting rights legislation and concerted action to combat rising extremism.

Biden’s visit to the “City of Brotherly Love” comes hours after an FBI hostage rescue team stormed a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, to free three hostages after a more than 10-hour standoff. Another hostage had been freed earlier.

The president, who was briefed on the crisis as it unfolded, said there was more to learn about what motivated the hostage-taker, but pledged to “stand against anti-Semitism and against the rise of extremism in this country.”

Biden and first lady Jill Biden were volunteering at Philabundance, a hunger relief organization in



Joshua Roberts / Reuters

President Joe Biden puts a bag of carrots into a box at Philabundance, a hunger relief organization in Philadelphia on Sunday.

Philadelphia, to mark Monday’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday.

In a proclamation on Friday, Biden warned against complacency and said it was crucial to continue King’s work by enacting legislation to protect voting rights, opposing the rise of

white supremacy and other forms of extremism, and pressing for greater economic justice.

“Living up to his legacy, and what Dr. King believed our Nation could become, requires more than just reflection – it requires action,” Biden said in the proclamation.

“That is why the Congress must pass Federal legislation to protect the right to vote – a right that is under attack by a sinister combination of voter suppression and election subversion. We must confront the scourge of racism and white supremacy – a stain on our Nation – and

give hate no safe harbor in America.”

But Biden’s push to enact voting rights legislation appears doomed after Democratic Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Joe Manchin said they opposed changing the Senate’s filibuster rule, which requires that 60 of the 100 senators agree on

most legislation, in a chamber where Democrats now hold only 50 seats.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer still plans to begin debate on the voting rights legislation on Tuesday. If Republicans block that bill as anticipated, Schumer said he was still prepared to seek a change in the Senate’s filibuster rule to win passage. But given Sinema and Manchin’s stance, efforts to change the filibuster appear doomed to fail.

Biden told reporters on Thursday he was not certain the bill could pass now but vowed to keep trying.

“One thing for certain: Like every other major civil rights bill that came along, if we miss the first time, we can come back and try it a second time. We missed this time.”

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives passed a voting bill on Thursday. But Democrats cannot overcome universal Republican opposition in the Senate without changing the filibuster.

FBI: Texas synagogue hostage taker was a British citizen

Reuters

The FBI identified a hostage taker killed at a Texas synagogue as a British citizen, after U.S. President Joe Biden earlier on Sunday said the gunman had used weapons he got off the street to commit “an act of terror.”

The FBI identified the man as Malik Faisal Akram, 44, who was killed after the safe release of his four hostages on Saturday night from the synagogue in Colleyville, Texas.

His brother Gulbar posted on Facebook that the suspect, from the industrial town of Blackburn, in the north of England, suffered from mental illness and said the family had spent all night at the Blackburn police station “liaising with Faisal, the negotiators, FBI etc.”

“There was nothing we could have said to him or done that would have convinced him to surrender,” Gulbar wrote on the Blackburn Muslim Community’s Facebook page.

He said the FBI was due to fly into the UK “later today,” saying that the family as a result could say little more.

“We would like to say that we as a family do not condone any of his actions and would like



Brandon Bell / Getty Images / TNS

A law enforcement vehicle sits near the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue on Sunday in Colleyville, Texas. All four people who were held hostage at the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue were safely released after more than 10 hours of being held captive by a gunman.

to sincerely apologize wholeheartedly to all the victims involved in the unfortunate incident,” the brother wrote.

The hostage-taking in Colleyville, Texas, “was an act of terror,” said Biden, who was in Philadelphia with first lady Jill Biden packing carrots and apples at a food bank in a visit to the city to honor the legacy of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

An FBI Hostage Rescue Team on Saturday night stormed Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, about 16 miles northeast of Fort Worth, ending a 10-hour standoff with

police by the gunman, who disrupted a Sabbath service and took the rabbi and three other people hostage.

One hostage was released unharmed after six hours and the remaining three were later safely freed by the FBI team.

SWAT teams from the Colleyville Police Department responded to the synagogue after emergency calls began at about 10:41 a.m. during the Sabbath service. FBI negotiators soon opened contact with the man, who said he wanted to speak to a woman held in a federal prison.

Airlines have cancel over 2,700 flights

Winter storm hits East Coast

By Kanishka Singh
Reuters

Airlines canceled over 2,700 U.S. flights on Sunday as a winter storm combining high winds and ice was poised to hit the U.S. East Coast over the holiday weekend.

The flights canceled by 12:30 p.m. on Sunday included over 2,700 entering, departing from or within the United States, according to flight tracking website FlightAware.com. Over 1,500 flights were delayed, the data showed.

American Airlines Group Inc had over 600 flight cancellations. Almost 95% of the flights out of Charlotte Douglas International Airport in North Carolina, an American Airlines hub, were canceled, the FlightAware website <https://flightaware.com/live/canceled> showed.

American Airlines is allowing customers affected by the weather to rebook flights without a fee.

A major winter storm will impact the eastern United States on Sunday into Monday, the National Weather Service said. The highest snowfall totals were expected along the spine of the Appalachians as well as across the lower Great Lakes.

The most significant icing was expected over the Carolinas, with significant impacts to travel across those regions, the NWS said. About 74 million people were under winter weather alerts as of Saturday evening,



Brian Snyder / Reuters file photo

A passenger walks past a Delta Airlines plane at a gate at Logan International Airport, amid flight cancellations and disruptions on Jan. 3 in Boston.

according to NWS.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp tweeted on Sunday that people should avoid non-essential travel in areas impacted by the storm. The governors of Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina had declared emergencies due to the storm.

In North Carolina, Transportation Secretary Eric Boyette said crews are prepared to plow and de-ice roads, and remove downed trees and debris in anticipation of snow and ice accumulation on Sunday.

More than 1,200 transportation department employees have been pre-treating roads across the state since Thursday, Boyette said.

Boyette said nearly 2.5 million gallons of brine have been spread on roads, and that the transportation department has more than 160,000 tons of salt on hand and more than 400 trucks ready to be deployed on Sunday.

“We are doing our part, but we need everyone else to do their part too,” Boyette said. “Once the storm hits later today and tonight, please stay home.”

Tribune News Service contributed to this report.