The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Mostly sunny this am • Tomorrow: Some rain Extra Bit

LORENZO TUGNOLI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The drug trade now flourishing in Afghanistan: Meth

Experts worry the country, already a hub for opium production, could be fueling a new global crisis

Afghan drug traffickers have been harnessing a native plant called ephedra, which is a natural source of meth's key ingredient. Ephedra powder is boiled with chemicals to produce the drug, as seen above.

BY SUSANNA R GEORGE AND JOBY WARRICK

BAEWA, AFGHANISTAN — Afghanistan's fastest-growing drug industry operates from discreet outposts in plain view.

One of its most bustling hubs, some five hours west of Kandahar, can only be reached by miles of dirt tracks that lead to a row of dusty shops topped with Taliban flags. Wholesalers like Abdulwahood work openly here, moving dozens of kilos of methamphetamine every week.

In the middle of his crowded shop, he casually tosses a half-kilo bag of long glassy shards onto the carpet. Its street value in Europe is tens of thousands of dollars. Abdulwahood will sell it for about $320.

"Every year, sales and production just increase and increase," he said, speaking on the condition that only his first name be used to discuss the illicit drug industry. Behind him the rest of his stock was piled in a corner. He expected to sell the roughly 20 kilos of shisha — the Afghan term for meth — in just a few days.

For decades, the country has been a global hub for opium production, estimated to supply 80 percent of the world's opiate users. Now its meth industry is growing at breakneck speed, stoking fears among Western experts and officials that, under the Taliban, Afghanistan could become a major supplier as demand rises globally.

Hundreds of meth labs have appeared in Afghanistan over the past six years, according to independent experts, former government officials and drug traders. And more are being built each month as the country's economic crisis forces Afghans to find new sources of income. The vast majority of meth produced is for export, but an increasing number of Afghans are turning to it as their drug of choice.

The sudden boom in meth production came after drug traffickers discovered a potential bonanza in a native plant called

SEE EPHEDRA IN 08

In draft abortion ruling, Democrats see minority rule

CRITICS SAY COURT IS AT ODDS WITH VOTERS

Blowback echoes familiar Republican judicial critique

BY MICHAEL SCHERER

For nearly half a century, Republicans have rallied against "unelected judges" making rulings that they claim disenfranchise voters from deciding for themselves what laws should govern hot-button issues.

But since the release this week of a draft Supreme Court opinion that would overturn the long-standing constitutional right to abortion, Democrats have been the ones embracing that complaint, flipping the script as the party vents its frustration with elements of the U.S. system that have empowered a minority of the country's voters to elect lawmakers who have successfully reshaped the high court.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) denounced the apparent conservative majority behind the draft opinion as "in no way accountable to the American people." Rep. Jamie B. Raskin (D-Md.) described them as "handpicked and gerrymandered by theocrats and autocrats." Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) cast the document as the

SEE ABORTION ON A4

Antiabortion groups energized — but cautious

BY HANNAH KNOWLES, RACHEL HOLDEN AND BRITTANY SHAMMAS

Minutes after reading that the Supreme Court was prepared to gut *Roe v. Wade*, Kristan Hawkins joined a conference call to plan.

The antiabortion activist had rearranged her life for this moment, even selling her house last year and moving her family into a camper to travel the country advocating for abortion restrictions. Now a leaked majority opinion said *Roe* "must be overruled."

But it was only a draft. On their call, Hawkins and fellow activists at Students for Life of America scrambled to respond. "We got to get folks at the court tomorrow,"

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Pills by mail
Popular and difficult to police. A15

Phone can reveal past abortion
Apps, data leave digital trail. A18

At White House, panic followed by sober realizations

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB AND TYLER PAGER

In the hours after a leaked Supreme Court document signaled the court was poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the coming weeks, President Biden vowed to fight to protect access to abortion.

"We will be ready when any ruling is issued," Biden said in a statement Tuesday.

But in marathon meetings and phone calls among White House officials, government lawyers, outside advisers and federal agency officials, a sobering reality settled in: There's little the White House can do that will fundamentally alter a post-*Roe* landscape. While officials have spent months planning for the possibility the court

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Began limits abortion training
Md. governor withholds funds. B1

Significance of the story
A battle to shape the narrative. C1

Federal Reserve raises rates in effort to address inflation

Increase of half a percentage point is steepest since 2000

BY RACHEL SIEGEL AND ÁSHA BERTRAND

The Federal Reserve raised interest rates Wednesday by half a percentage point and scaled back other pandemic-era economic supports, strengthening its efforts to fight the highest inflation in 40 years and vowing to keep up the pressure as Americans continue to struggle.

"Inflation is much too high," Fed Chair Jerome H. Powell said at a Wednesday news conference. "We understand the hardship it is causing, and we are moving expeditiously to bring it back down. We have both the tools we need and the resolve that it will take to restore price stability on behalf of American families and businesses."

The rate increase is the sharpest since 2000 and the second of seven hikes forecast for this year. Powell added that additional interest rate hikes as high as 0.5 percentage points are "on the table" in the coming months but said policymakers had not seriously discussed even sharper increases. Major financial markets edged higher during his remarks, as investors signaled relief that the Fed wouldn't move more aggressively.

Faced with soaring prices and a hot job market with record numbers of job openings, the Fed is betting that a steady series of hikes will slash inflation, cool the economy and get the coronavirus recovery on more sustainable footing, at a time when much uncertainty looms in the global economy. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has driven up energy prices, and covid-19 shutdowns in China have triggered a new wave of supply chain snarls, both threatening to make the Fed's job much harder.

Powell said he understood that the stakes are high for

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Ukrainian villages hear whispers of collaboration

'The war showed who is who': When the Russians came, some people seemed to help them

JOSH HAYNER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Vitaly Mizenko, shown in Yahidne last month, said Russians damaged his cars. He and his wife are considered wealthy in the Ukrainian village and think the soldiers had inside information on them.

BY ROBERT KLEMKO AND ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN

B'ANDYKA, UKRAINE — Olena peered out from her bedroom window to see what looked like her neighbor, a tall man nicknamed Grecha, step out of a car with Russian markings and begin sending flares into the night sky from the side of the road. The next day, Russian tanks and armored vehicles emerged from the woods in a long column, descending on this small village about 50 miles south of the Russian border, along the same road.

Days later, after the Russian retreat from northern and central Ukraine, four investigators from the Security Service of Ukraine filed into 55-year-old Olena's living room. She told them what she'd seen and showed them the

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Infrastructure: Russia is targeting resupply capacity, officials say. A12

Culture crackdown: Artists in Russia now face dark times. A13