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NATHANIEL LEVINE nlevine@sacbee.com



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Migrants flown here may be able to sue plane company

BY MATHEW MIRANDA
mmiranda@sacbee.com

A first-in-the-nation court ruling may have particular importance in the capital region for a group of 36 migrants who arrived in Sacramento nearly a year ago.

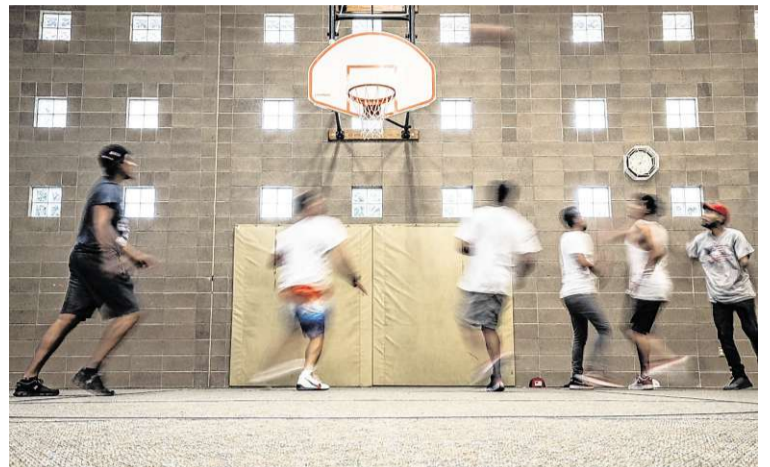
A federal judge in Boston ruled earlier this month mi-

grants flown to Martha's Vineyard almost two years ago can move forward with a lawsuit against the private plane company that transported them. The ruling determined the migrants sufficiently alleged multiple claims including "false imprisonment," "emotional distress" and "civil rights conspiracy."

"We should be concerned for the welfare and well being of

the migrants that are being transported and we should take a closer look at the role that the transportation companies play in these schemes," said Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, the executive director for Lawyers for Civil Rights, the Boston-based legal group representing the Martha's Vineyard migrants.

The decision means the migrants can file a case against



HECTOR AMEZCUA hamezcua@sacbee.com

Migrants transported in June 2023 by the state of Florida to Sacramento play basketball at a church soon after their arrival.

Vertol Systems Co., which was contracted by the state of Florida to carry out the flights. In her order, U.S. District Judge

Allison Burroughs dismissed claims against Florida Gov.

SEE MIGRANTS, 6A



RENÉE C. BYER rbyer@sacbee.com

Jennie Welles, formally homeless, center, joins dozens at a rally on Monday at the Robert T. Matsui federal courthouse in Sacramento in support of homeless rights on the day the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments about laws regulating homeless encampments.

High court skeptical of laws against homeless encampments

BY GILLIAN BRASSIL
gbrassil@mcclatchydc.com

WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court heard arguments on Monday over whether fining or arresting unhoused people who lack other shelter and camp in pub-

lic areas violates constitutional protections against cruel and unusual punishments.

It is the most important Supreme Court case about homelessness in 40 years, advocates say, and has the potential to affect much broader policy. A decision siding with the Oregon town at the center of the case

could allow officials in California or elsewhere to fine and arrest unhoused people sleeping outside with as little as a blanket.

California officials have a strong interest in the case, City of Grants Pass v. Johnson, as the state grapples with some of the highest rates of homeless-

ness and housing costs in the United States. Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis, Rep. Kevin Kiley, R-Roseville, and Sacramento District Attorney Thien Ho were among those at the oral arguments in Washington D.C. on Monday.

SEE HOMELESS, 5A

An unprecedented trial opens with 2 visions of Trump

BY JONAH E. BROMWICH AND BEN PROTESS
NYT News Service

NEW YORK

Manhattan prosecutors delivered a raw recounting of Donald Trump's past on Monday as they debuted their case against him to jurors, the nation and the world, reducing the former

president to a co-conspirator in a plot to cover up three sex scandals that threatened his 2016 election win.

Their opening statement was a pivotal moment in the first prosecution of an American president, a sweeping synopsis of the case against Trump, who watched from the defense table, occasionally shaking his

head. Moments later, Trump's lawyer delivered his own opening, beginning with the simple claim that "President Trump is innocent," then noting that he is once again the presumptive Republican nominee and concluding with an exhortation for jurors to "use your common sense."

The jury of 12 New Yorkers

who will weigh Trump's legal fate before millions of voters decide his political future also heard brief testimony from the prosecution's leadoff witness, David Pecker, a former tabloid publisher who was close with Trump. Pecker, who ran The National Enquirer, testified that his supermarket tabloids practiced "checkbook journalism." In this case, prosecutors say, he bought and buried stories that could have imperiled Trump's 2016 campaign.

The flurry of activity on the

SEE TRUMP, 6A

Different type of 'Pineapple Express' saved state from more drought

BY PAUL ROGERS
Bay Area News Group

Atmospheric river storms are like punches in a boxing match. A flurry of weak ones are OK. But it's best to avoid the big knockout blows.

That's exactly what happened in California this winter. Scientists say that from Oct. 1 to April 1, the state actually received more atmospheric rivers, the famous moisture-laden meteorological events that are critical to the water supply, than it did last year — 44 this winter compared to 31 last winter.

But the intensity made all the difference. Statewide, California had just 2 strong atmospheric rivers this winter, compared with 7 last year.

Many of the biggest this winter hit Washington and Oregon instead. The result was, for the most part, a remarkably, blissfully average rainy season for California.

"California is usually either extremely wet or dry," said Chad Hecht, a meteorologist with the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at UC San Diego, which compiled the data. "This year was abnormally normal. I'll take it. It's better than not having any storms at all — or what we had last year, which was one really strong storm after another."

Hecht's center developed a scale in 2019 to measure atmospheric river storms from 1 to 5, from weakest to strongest, based on the amount of moisture they carry and the number of hours they are expected to linger over land.

Last winter, 11 of the state's atmospheric river storms were weak, 13 were moderate and 7 were strong. This year, 26 were weak, 16 were moderate and 2 were strong.

The result: Reservoirs are full. And the Sierra Nevada snowpack is currently at 110% of normal, not too big, not too small.

This time last year, the snowpack was a staggering 247% of its historical average, the big-

SEE DROUGHT, 6A



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