

OLYMPICS



SIMONE BILES of the United States waves to fans after qualifying for the women's team gymnastics at the 2024 Paris Olympics on Sunday. The U.S. women, led by Biles, won the team gold on Tuesday. **SPORTS, B10**

Olympics once again buzzing as energy, crowds return to Games

After the COVID ebb at Tokyo, fans are showing up, much to the delight of athletes.

By David Wharton

PARIS — In what has become a daily ritual, crowds jostle along the Champs-Élysées, bypassing cafes and expensive shops, moving eastward in numbers so great that they spill off the

sidewalks and into the

They are headed for fencing at the Grand Palais or skateboarding at the Place de la Concorde. An Uber driver grumbles as he navigates through the cha-

"Too many people," he

Scenes like this have played out across the city in the early days of the 2024 Summer Olympics, with throngs of fans descending on stadiums and arenas.

Once inside, they have cheered and chanted and sung "La Marseillaise" for French athletes.

All of which is good news for the Games.

A global pandemic muffled the last two editions of this international competition in Tokyo and Beijing. Spectators were largely prohibited, leaving athletes to compete in ghostly silence. There wasn't much congregating in public spaces.

Now, Paris is showing

signs of a rebound. Though final tourism numbers and ticket sales are still to be determined, sports such as rugby and basketball already have drawn record attendance.

It seems the Olympics are getting their buzz back.

'We all really thrive off the crowd and the energy," said American gymnast Suni Lee, who won allaround gold in an empty Tokyo arena. "It's just going to be a lot more fun this

[See Olympics, A9]

Identity-based groups fuel a groundswell of aid for Harris

Black women, white dudes and others have diverse reasons for contributing.

By Faith E. Pinho AND JENNY JARVIE

Disabled voters for Harris. White dudes for Harris. Crazy cat ladies for Harris.

Since Vice President Kamala Harris vaulted into becoming the likely Democratic nominee for president a week ago, a groundswell of identity-based grassroots groups have sprung up online to rally behind her. The nightly calls are raising millions of dollars and securing hundreds of volunteers, drawing comparisons to the grassroots efforts that propelled former President Obama to victory in 2008.

But in 2024, in an era when identity shapes so much of politics, the rise of the first Black woman and first Asian American who is likely to be nominated for president by a major party is drawing more identity groups out of the woodwork.

"This is unprecedented diversity in the political pool," said Pei-Te Lien, a professor in UC Santa Barbara's Politics of Identity program. "That's another reason why 'identity group' comes up, because we also see identity being recognized and used as leverage in

the campaigns, in an unprecedented level.'

Within hours after President Biden announced he would not seek reelection and endorsed Harris as his replacement nominee, more than 44,000 Black women and allies from across the country gathered online, raising over \$1.5 million, according to organizers. The template for that event, organized by Win With Black Women, was repeated the next day by Win With Black Men, which organizers said brought 45,000 Black men and raised \$1.3 million.

"It's organic," said Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman, who attended a Zoom call for South Asians supporting Harris last week. "I think people are clear-eyed about what this moment means. I think they just feel a sense of hope that we actually could defeat Trump, and we could do it with a candidate that reflects the America that all these immigrants live in.'

With fewer than 100 days to the election and a new candidate leading Democratic Party, the flood of groups — including Latino Men for Harris, Caribbean-Americans for Harris, Dads for Kamala and Native Women + Two Spirit for Harris — are motivated by a

"sense of crisis," Lien said. "They feel like we are not in the mainstream — we are not able to have too much in-[See Groups, A6]

Regulators hustle to start testing for pesticides in weed

By PAIGE ST. JOHN

Under intense pressure from millions of weed users. California officials scrambling to test cannabis products for pesticides following a Times investigation last month revealing that regulators have failed to keep vapes and pre-rolls rife with toxic chemicals out of

revelation shook consumer confidence in the safety of legal products and panicked industry leaders: Three leading dispensary chains announced their own product testing programs in the absence of similar safety checks by regulators.

The Department of Cannabis Control has publicly proclaimed it was able to check for pesticides in weed products. But the agency acknowledged using other

state labs for those tests after The Times learned of the arrangements.

A spokesman for the department contended its claims to be able to test for pesticides included the work of labs at other agencies. One of the labs is run by

the Department of Toxic Substances Control, within the state's Environmental Protection Agency.

The toxic substances lab, located in Pasadena, was enlisted before it was able to test for most of the chemicals that weed products must be screened for, according to interviews and internal records reviewed by The Times.

Since the Times report, regulators have used those partial and hastily arranged tests to recall nine contaminated products based on the presence of one chemi-

[See Cannabis, A7]



LEFT OUT of last month's presidential debate, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., shown in West Hollywood, countered by simulcasting his answers to the debate questions.

For RFK Jr.'s campaign, it's a struggle to stay relevant

Independent is left on the sidelines as Trump shooting and Biden's exit remake 2024 race.

By James Rainey

A faltering debate performance, an assassination attempt and a dramatic exit from the presidential race all had one thing in common they put Robert F. Kennedv Jr. even further from the spotlight in the race for the White House.

Kennedy insists that his time is still coming and that President Biden's decision to bow out in favor of Vice President Kamala Harris has driven a surge of interest in his independent campaign. But experts said they see this month's historic events doing the opposite, pushing the independent candidate further from rele-

Kennedy's greatest recent attention came not because of news of progress in his own campaign, but when the Washington Post disclosed that he had talked to former President Trump about endorsing his campaign and taking a job in a second Trump administra-

"It sounded like he was nothing but a rank opportunist," said Michael A. Genovese, a political scientist at Loyola Marymount University. "That was devastating for him."

Melissa M. Smith, an expert on independent presidential candidates, said Kennedy's path to relevancy has become even more diffi-

"The Republicans and the Democrats are just sucking all the oxygen out of the room right now," said Smith, author of "Third Parties, Outsiders, and Renegades: Modern Challenges to the Two-Party System in Presidential Elections."

In a telephone interview from his family's compound in Hyannis Port, Mass., Kennedy downplayed his conversation with Trump, saying he would also be open to talking to Harris or "anybody who wants to protect children's health" — a topic [See **RFK Jr.,** A12]

Vernon plant on brink of Superfund site status

By Tony Briscoe

A battery recycling plant in southeast Los Angeles County is one step closer to becoming a Superfund site after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined it contains enough hazardous waste to qualify and California officials wel-

comed federal assistance. For nearly a century, the former Exide Technologies plant in Vernon melted down lead-acid car batteries, leaving as many as 10,000 properties coated in braindamaging lead dust, according to state environmental regulators.

Since the facility declared bankruptcy, California has dedicated \$750 million and overseen the cleanup of more than 5,000 lead-contaminated properties surrounding the Exide site. But, over the last two years, a coalition of federal and state lawmakers, including U.S. Sens. Alex Padilla and the late Dianne Feinstein, have called for a Superfund designation in hopes that it might bring in federal funding that could help expedite the cleanup or

potentially expand its scope. An EPA report published last week concluded that the Exide site and surrounding communities meet the criteria to be a Superfund site -[See Exide, A7]

Senate hearing on Trump shooting Acting Secret Service chief laments failure to better

secure the roof used by the gunman. NATION, A5

Dodgers hit it big at trade deadline

They fill greatest need by acquiring starting pitcher, Bill Plaschke writes. sports, B10

Weather Mostly sunny.

L.A. Basin: 82/64. **B6**

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It's not all about superhero films

Hollywood's investing in more mid-tier movies would be a welcome move. BUSINESS, A8

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