MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024 · \$3

A glimpse of a hotter climate to come

The planet might have entered the age of 'global boiling' in 2023

BY CHICO HARLAN

AVAS, GREECE — By the time the flames were barreling down the slope, heading for 40 miles of parched forest, the fire chief said he already knew: This was the big

His part of Greece had gone two months without rain. A record heat wave had baked the area for weeks. Within hours, the fire had sprinted through acres of pines, hissing and spouting 120foot flames, reaching the brink of a village where a single home belonging to Kostas Dinas, a retired attorney - was perched on the hillside outskirts.

Dinas, 66, had figured he'd live in that home until they "carried me out flat."

But then came the hottest year humanity had ever seen.

It had been a year that had started with merely very hot temperatures and then intensified midway. What made the subsequent months stand out wasn't so much any single record but rather the heat's all-consuming relentlessness. It went day by day, continent by continent, until people all over the map, whether in the Amazon or the Pacific islands or rural Greece, had glimpsed a climate future for which they are not prepared.

"It felt like the earth was about to explode," Dinas said.

Even if its extremes are ultimately eclipsed, as seems inevitable, 2023 will mark a point SEE CLIMATE ON A4

Biden mum on record U.S. oil production on his watch

BY EVAN HALPER AND TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA

You won't hear President Biden talking about it much, but a key record has been broken during his watch: The United States is producing more oil than any country ever has.

The flow of huge amounts of crude from American producers is playing a big role in keeping prices down at the pump, diminishing the geopolitical power of OPEC and taming inflation. The average price of a gallon of regular gasoline nationwide has dropped to close to \$3, and analysts project it could stay that way leading up to the presidential election, potentially assuaging the economic anxieties of swingstate voters who will be crucial to Biden's hopes of a second term.

But it is not something the president publicly boasts about. The politics of oil are particularly tricky for Democrats, whose chances for victory in the 2024 elections could hinge on whether young, climate-conscious voters come out in big numbers. Many of those voters want to hear that Biden is doing everything in his

power to keep oil in the ground. "If you are not looking carefully at what the administration is actually doing, it is easy to get the wrong impression," said Kevin Book, managing director at ClearView Energy Partners, a research firm. "There are a lot of SEE OIL ON A5



Angelo Soriano, a nurse from the Philippines, cares for a patient at Sanford Medical Center in Bismarck, N.D. Thousands of nurses overseas are ready to recharge a U.S. hospital industry decimated by pandemic burnout and retirements. But most can't get here.

ne leaders of Sanford Medical Center had waited all summer to learn the fate of the 59 nurses planning to move across the world to their isolated state capital. The reinforcements from the Philippines, Kenya and Nigeria would allow the hospital to expand its heart unit and staff a new wing. Costly temporary nurses would go. The scramble to fill shifts would finally be over.

But by the time the hospital's department heads gathered in a conference room this fall to hear the latest development, the news already had spread. The nurses were delayed - again.

"We're projecting no arrivals until the first quarter of 2025 or later," Wendy Kopp, the chief of nursing and clinical services, told the solemn room.

Days before the early morning meeting in September, the State Department had announced that it would issue the type of work visas that the nurses needed only to those who had applied before December 2021. That would exclude dozens of new hires critical to Sanford's efforts to replenish its depleted bedside staff during its

Broken U.S. immigration system leaves firms struggling

A North Dakota hospital is desperate for nurses, but visa backlogs and other problems keep overseas applicants away

> BY LISA REIN IN BISMARCK, N.D.

biggest workforce crisis in years. The nurses were left adrift with no immediate path to the United

It was one more gut punch from a broken immigration system untouched by Congress for 33 years and largely operating on a framework dating to 1965. As a record surge of unauthorized migrants enters the United States through its southern border, stoking political divisions and straining resources, the troubled sys $tem\,for\,those\,eligible\,to\,come\,here$ legally has buckled in the background. Congress splintered over the issue again last month, as Republicans resisted calls from the Biden administration for more aid to Ukraine unless it comes with more-stringent border policies.

Since Congress last updated the number of new arrivals the country will admit each year - a tiny fraction of whom are allowed to come in permanently to work the economy is more than twice as large. But despite growing demand to help fill 8.7 million open jobs with skilled and unskilled SEE NURSES ON A6

Red Sea firefight stokes tensions

U.S. HELICOPTERS FEND OFF HOUTHIS

Shipping fears in busy maritime route increase

> BY KAREEM FAHIM. LEO SANDS. **BRYAN PIETSCH** AND EVAN HALPER

U.S. Navy helicopters exchanged fire with Houthi militants from Yemen in the Red Sea on Sunday, U.S. Central Command said, in a marked escalation of tensions in one of the world's busiest maritime routes that is part of the regional spillover from Israel's war in the Gaza Strip.

The incident unfolded Sunday morning, when Houthi militants, in four small boats, approached the Singapore-flagged, Danishowned Maersk Hangzhou and exchanged fire with a security team onboard, a Centcom statement said. After the militants fired on U.S. helicopters that answered a distress call from the ship, the helicopters returned fire, sinking three of the four Houthi boats and killing their crew members, it said.

The helicopters, dispatched from the USS Eisenhower and USS Gravely, did not sustain damage, the statement added, and no U.S. personnel were injured. A Houthi military spokesman said 10 members of the movement were dead or missing.

"It's one of the most important, most vital commercial waterways in the world," John Kirby, strategic communications coordinator at the National Security Council, said Sunday on ABC's "Good Morning America."

"And we have an obligation with our allies and partners to keep the flow of commerce," he

The Houthis, an Iranianbacked militant group that controls northern Yemen, have been SEE GAZA ON A11

'We need more fighters like her'

Eleanor Traylor, 'sister-friend' of Angelou, Baldwin and Morrison, champions their books and other banned literature



THE REGION

At 90, literary critic and former Howard department head Eleanor Traylor keeps a packed schedule of speaking engagements celebrating her friends and orates on the censorship and banning of books.

BY KEITH L. ALEXANDER

leanor Traylor has a schedule that rivals those of most Washington dignitaries.

On a Sunday afternoon in October, Traylor was speaking on the life of actress Hattie McDaniel during a ceremony at Howard University marking the return of the Black actress's historic 1940 Oscar, which had long been missing from the school. After a horde of guests jostled to take photos with her, Traylor slipped out the back door and into the driver's seat of her cobalt-blue

Mercedes. An onlooker marveled, "Dr. Traylor, you still drive?" "Of course I still drive. I'm

not dead yet," she snapped,

putting her car in reverse. Traylor, who turned 90 in December, bristles at the notion that age should slow her down. The former head of Howard's humanities and English departments, Traylor is among the last of a closeknit generation of African American writers that included James Baldwin, Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. As many of her old friends' published works have faced book bans, Traylor has become one of the most prominent voices countering that effort.

In the days following the McDaniel ceremony, Traylor hosted a private reception at her Dupont Circle home attended by Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and BET Networks Chair Debra L. Lee. She had a fitting with a private designer for a new gown that Traylor had modeled after the one Lady Gaga wore at President Biden's 2021 inauguration. She was a panelist at Martin Luther King Library, where an award-winning documentary on Angelou's life was shown. A week later, she was a guest speaker for a program honoring Inez Smith Reid, a retired judge of the D.C. Court of Appeals. Then Traylor was on a flight to Paris to spend Thanksgiving with friends.

SEE TRAYLOR ON $\mathbf{A8}$

IN THE NEWS

The List Hard launches, the Roman Empire and AI plagiarism are out for 2024. Soft failure, the Mayan Empire and AI job replacement are in. C1

A familiar culprit Scientists link the beaching of a fin whale to an orca pod swimming near the coast of Southern California. A3

THE NATION Supreme Court ethics issues went unaddressed in the chief justice's yearly report. A9 The new FAFSA form for college aid is slimmer but has opportunities for some families. A9

THE WORLD

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark will step down in January after 52 years on the throne. A2 In Rome, a new eatery caters to canine palates with dining options for dogs and humans. A10

THE ECONOMY **Overloaded** with all

those meetings at work? Some companies are implementing a "meeting doomsday" method to have employees clear their schedules and rebuild them from scratch. A14

STYLE

More than a dozen laws covering wages and ca Street, who writes health care are set to take effect in Maryland and Virginia. B1 **Students and** parents accused a D.C. high school of censorship after barring a screening of a documentary on the war in Gaza. B1

CNN reporter Frances-

about love and romance, was one of 2023's most engaging reporters. C2 Paula Abdul alleged in a recently filed lawsuit that former "American Idol" producer Nigel Lythgoe sexually assaulted her. C3

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