



Mostly sunny 82/64 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 82/65 **B6**

Democracy Dies in Darkness

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2024 • **\$3**

## New video challenges IDF account of shooting

Witnesses say clashes had subsided when U.S. activist was killed

This article is by Miriam Berger, Loveday Morris, Meg Kelly, Jarrett Ley and Sufian Taha

BEITTA, WEST BANK — It was Ay-senur Eygi's first time at a West Bank demonstration, and she was nervous.

The 26-year-old Turkish American told fellow activists she hoped to be a "protective presence" for Palestinians at a time of spiraling violence across the Israeli-occupied territory.

"We had both decided we did not want to be near any action at all," said Helen, a volunteer from Australia in her early 60s who was with Eygi throughout the day.

Eygi's caution did not protect her. She was fatally shot in the head on Friday in the village of Beita, near Nablus, following brief clashes after Friday prayers. The Israel Defense Forces said Tuesday it was "very likely" she had been hit "unintentionally" by one of its soldiers. "The incident took place during a violent riot," the statement said, and the fire was aimed at "the key instigator."

But a Washington Post investigation has found that Eygi was shot more than a half-hour after the height of confrontations in Beita, and some 20 minutes after protesters had moved down the main road — more than 200 yards away from Israeli forces. A Palestinian teenager, who witnesses say was standing about 20 yards from Eygi, was wounded by Israeli fire; the IDF would not say if he was a target.

Citing an ongoing investigation, the IDF also declined to answer questions from The Post about why its forces fired toward

SEE SHOOTING ON A15

## Inflation drops again, to 3-year low, locking in a likely rate cut

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

Inflation eased again in August, dropping to the lowest level in more than three years and locking in expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates next week for the first time since the pandemic's early days.

Data released Wednesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed prices climbed 2.5 percent in the 12 months ending in August. That was a noticeable improvement over the 2.9 percent notched in July, in part because of falling gas prices. Prices also climbed 0.2 percent over the previous month.

Housing costs accounted for more than 70 percent of the overall year-over-year increase. However, policymakers are skeptical that the measures reflected in the consumer price index offer an up-to-date snapshot of that market. Other real-time indicators have shown rents easing considerably, or even falling, in major cities for much of the year. But the Fed will be hard-pressed to wrestle inflation down to normal levels until official statistics fall in line. According to the BLS, two key rent gauges are showing little relief compared with previous months.

SEE INFLATION ON A20



YUKI IWAMURA/AP

### A show of unity in a contentious campaign

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris attend a remembrance ceremony Wednesday at the 9/11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan along with former New York mayor Mike Bloomberg, center, and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance. For more on the events marking the terrorist attacks of 23 years ago, see pages A4 and A6.

## After the Trump shooting, a shattered peace in Butler

BY TIM CRAIG

BUTLER, PA. — One of the city's most famous artists has created a 400-pound sculpture of Donald Trump raising his fist in the air, capturing the moment that split this Pennsylvania community in two. Digital billboards blaming Democrats and the media for the assassination attempt still flash around town. And supporters of Vice President Kamala Harris say they're routinely heckled.

In an August visit, the long-simmering tensions in Butler that erupted after a gunman shot Trump in the ear at a rally had yet to cool. The former president's infamous words after being hit — "fight, fight, fight" — have in some ways been adopted as the city's motto as both sides dig in and try to

ensure that their candidate wins enough votes here to capture a key battleground state.

"The statue and 'fight, fight, fight' resonates with everybody," said Bob Oesterling, a local businessman and Trump supporter. "Everyone knows you got to 'fight, fight, fight' or we are done as the United States of America."

Trump won 65 percent of the vote in Butler County in 2020 and needs to win here by a large margin again to carry Pennsylvania, motivating both Republicans and Democrats to get out the vote. But in the process, divisions are withering the backbone of a community that has historically prided itself on not letting politics get in the way of relationships.

"People that come in are very

SEE BUTLER ON A24

## Spawned on Facebook, a racist smear gets the GOP megaphone

BY SARAH ELLISON AND JEREMY B. MERRILL

It started with a tragedy, gained momentum online with neo-Nazis and became Donald Trump's message from the presidential debate stage.

A Midwestern town grappling with the fallout from an influx of Haitian immigrants became a focal point for racist and xenophobic memes this week after Trump's running mate, Sen. JD Vance (Ohio), claimed Monday that in Springfield, Ohio, people "have had their pets abducted and eaten by people who shouldn't be in this country."

The allegation, based on scattered social media posts drawing on photos and stories far from Springfield, unspooled over several days into a twisted and demagogued message that

Trump amplified on the debate stage for tens of millions of viewers. The moment highlighted how the real issues facing American towns can turn almost instantly into politically fruitful — and potentially dangerous — campaign fodder, particularly when they involve race or migrants.

Three days after the rumor became national news, no credible accounts of pets being abducted or eaten in Springfield have been documented.

The Haitian rumor is only the latest example of the Trump campaign stoking racial divides. During the debate, Trump repeated his questions about Harris's racial identity, claiming nonsensically that she only recently decided to be Black.

The perverse assertion that

SEE IMMIGRANTS ON A11



CARMEN YASMINE ABD ALI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

### In Gambia, ending a grisly tradition

Oumu Bah, a former practitioner of female genital mutilation, in the courtyard of her home in rural Gambia where she once carried out the ceremonies. Now, an informal sleuth on a motorbike makes sure she and others hold to their vows to end the practice. His warning: "You will face the law." **Story, A14**

## Letters reveal doomed effort to court union for U.S. Steel

Japanese firm's months of promises fail to win support for merger

BY DAVID J. LYNCH

After spending more than a week trying to secure a meeting with the president of the United Steelworkers union, Nippon Steel's Takahiro Mori finally got an answer. But it was not the one he wanted.

"I want to be direct with you," David McCall, the USW boss, wrote in an April 5 email. "A one-hour meeting between the two of us is not going to address the fatal problems with Nippon's proposed acquisition of U.S. Steel."

Ever since announcing a \$14.9 billion acquisition of U.S. Steel, Japan's Nippon Steel had attempted to win the union's support. But despite repeated promises to guarantee the union's existing contract, rule

out layoffs or plant closures, and spend billion of dollars modernizing the American company's aging blast furnaces, the Japanese company had come up empty.

"We do not see how this transaction could ever receive [government] approval," McCall continued, "and given the developments of the past several weeks, we would have expected U.S. Steel and Nippon to recognize the realities and abandon the transaction."

The email was among nearly two dozen pieces of correspondence between Japanese executives and the union that Nippon Steel shared Tuesday with The Washington Post.

The documents reveal a nearly year-long courtship that seemed doomed from the start. McCall was irked by Nippon Steel's failure to consult the union before announcing the merger in December, which left him doubting its claims.

Nothing that multiple Japanese executives said over the

SEE STEELWORKERS ON A20

## IN THE NEWS

**Hurricane Francine arrives** The storm made landfall in Louisiana as a Category 2, threatening fierce winds, devastating surge and torrential rain. **A13**

**23 years later** A ceremony in Arlington was one of several held across the region to commemorate the victims of 9/11. **B1**

### THE NATION

**The Fearless Fund** will discontinue its grant program for Black women to end a lawsuit. **A2**  
**The next** electoral count will have far more security to stop a repeat of the Capitol attack. **A7**

### THE WORLD

**Mexico's** Senate passed a divisive judicial law after protesters stormed the chamber. **A15**  
**Secretary of State** Antony Blinken made a rare visit to Kyiv, reiterating U.S. support. **A17**

### THE ECONOMY

**Talking politics** at work doesn't have to be a minefield, but it can quickly devolve into one if you're not careful. **A19**  
**Inspectors** warned that a Boar's Head plant in Virginia posed an "imminent threat" two years before a listeria outbreak. **A19**

### THE REGION

**Ward 8 residents** are grappling with Trayon White Sr. as their candidate after he was charged with bribery. **B1**  
**Fairfax County** workers cleared an encampment known as "The Hill," which had sheltered unhoused individuals for years. **B1**

### OBITUARIES

**Frankie Beverly**, 77, was the exuberant frontman of enduring R&B act Maze, known for its joyous 1981 anthem "Before I Let Go." **B4**

### LOCAL LIVING

**Professional designers** offer tips for taking your apartment from college kid to adult.

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