



Sunny and hot 94/74 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 96/73 C8

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, JULY 28, 2024 • \$5

ELECTION 2024

Democrats get a burst of energy with Harris

In rapidly changing fight, Trump rushes to recast attacks on new opponent

BY HANNAH KNOWLES, MAEVE RESTON, DYLAN WELLS AND ISAAC ARNSDORF

ST. CLOUD, Minn. — Donald Trump supporters lining up to enter a rally here passed the usual tents hawking MAGA merchandise, but suddenly most of the gear attacking President Biden (often in vulgar terms) was gone. A few straggler stickers remained with a phrase that's code for a profane expression against Biden. New swag targeting Vice President Harris, the new likely Democratic nominee, had yet to arrive.

Those sale racks were a small but telling symbol of how the White House race has rapidly transformed since Biden withdrew last Sunday. Democrats have swung from despondency to jubilation with a surge of fundraising, volunteering and meme-making, with one dance club thumping to an excerpt of a viral quote from Harris about falling from a coconut tree. Republicans, meanwhile, have struggled to adapt to Biden's exit and settle on a clear message to define Harris, with just 100 days until the election.

"He will always be my first choice, but she's my second choice," Trump said Saturday of running against Biden or Harris

SEE CAMPAIGN ON A8

The Sunday Take: Can Harris translate energy to victory? **A2**

Crypto push: At bitcoin conference, Trump appeals to newest fans. **A5**

Cup of Joe: In a San Francisco cafe, Democrats process the week. **A3**



Usha Vance, wife of Sen. JD Vance, found Donald Trump's Jan. 6 role "deeply disturbing," a friend said.

Before working to elect Trump, Usha Vance said he appalled her

BY PETER JAMISON, BETH REINHARD, HANNAH NATANSON AND NICOLE MARKUS

During her rise through America's most prestigious schools, law firms and judicial clerkships, Usha Vance rarely — if ever — volunteered her opinions on the nation's bitterly partisan politics to friends and colleagues.

But she did express revulsion at former president Donald Trump's actions on Jan. 6, 2021.

Vance told friends she was outraged by Trump's incitement of the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol and lamented the social breakdown that fueled his political support, according to one friend, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive

SEE VANCE ON A6

JD Vance: In 2021, he called for giving parents additional votes. **A7**

PARIS OLYMPICS

Team USA gets its first taste of gold



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

The U.S. 4x100-meter freestyle relay team celebrates on the pool deck at Paris La Défense Arena after earning the first American gold medal of the Summer Olympics. Caeleb Dressel, in the pool, swam the anchor leg to bring home the gold in 3 minutes 9.28 seconds, holding off Australia by 1.07 seconds. Italy won bronze. **D1**

On your health portal: A speedy, scary diagnosis

BY FENIT NIRAPPIL

More Americans are learning of devastating health diagnoses through their phones and computers instead of personally from their doctors because of a federal requirement that people receive immediate access to medical test and scan results, from routine bloodwork to MRIs.

This shift has sparked a debate in the medical community about whether instant information empowers patients or harms them.

The new medical landscape resulting from a bipartisan law

More patients are feeling jolt of difficult medical news delivered online

promoting transparency has exposed fault lines in a stressed health-care system where the promises of technological advancements are undercut by the heavy workloads foisted on medical professionals.

As more people receive troubling results online at the same

time as their doctors — often waiting days or weeks for treatment plans — medical associations have been pushing to give doctors more time to release records revealing cancer and other grim diagnoses so patients don't have to bear the news alone.

Mike Day's cancer diagnosis arrived while he lounged in his living room recliner last summer. His wife, a former registered nurse, spotted "adenocarcinoma" in biopsy results posted to his electronic patient portal. His gastroenterologist was on vacation.

After unsuccessfully trying to

make an appointment to discuss the cancerous tumor in his esophagus, the Days went to a crowded emergency room where he lay on a stretcher in a hallway while a specialist discussed his prognosis.

There was no privacy as the doctor, speaking loudly within earshot of passersby, warned the cancer was incurable, Day's wife recalled.

Four weeks later, Day, a retired U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent in Bangor, Maine, died at age 75. His family is astounded

SEE DIAGNOSIS ON A11

Crushed by sanctions, the country's brutal leaders seize on illicit trade to keep their grip on power

BY JOBY WARRICK AND SOUAD MEKHENNET
IN KOM AL-RAF, JORDAN

On clear days, the Syrian villages along the border here look deceptively empty. The Jordanian soldiers peering north across no man's land see only dusty ghost towns where nothing moves except feral dogs and an occasional farmer working fields that have seen too little rain and too much war.

But on nights when the fog rolls in over the hills, the frontier takes on a sinister, alternate existence. Dozens of men — in trucks, on dirt bikes and on foot — emerge from the mist to form heavily armed columns for a race across the border.

They carry assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, even machine guns. Concealed in their vehicles and backpacks are hundreds of packages containing many tens of thousands of small white pills. The drugs, a synthetic stimulant called Captagon, are fresh from factories in the Syrian heartland that churn out an estimated \$10 billion worth

of illicit drugs each year.

In a country where traditional industry has all but ceased to exist, the pills are the fabulously profitable core of a zombie economy that has helped Syria's political and military elite cling to power after 13 years of civil war and a decade of crushing sanctions. Having swollen to a massive scale with tacit government approval, according to U.S. and Middle Eastern officials, the trade increasingly threatens Syria's neighbors, flooding the region with cheap drugs.

"If visibility is bad, they are coming — every single time," said Col. Essam Dweikat, commander of a Jordanian Armed Forces unit responsible for defending the western sector of the country's 200-mile border with Syria. "The problem is, the people who come across now are armed, and they are ready to fight."

Jordan has twice dispatched

SEE SYRIA ON A14



CHANTAL JAHCHAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

METRO

Jerry Falwell Jr. and Liberty reached a deal after his 2020 scandals.

SPORTS

Ariarne Titmus wins the "race of the century"; Katie Ledecky takes third.

ARTS & STYLE

➡ Jeremy O. Harris's "Slave Play" invented a theater of racial trauma.

BOOK WORLD

"Hillbilly Elegy" and JD Vance's art of having it both ways.

TRAVEL

➡ Who has the best creemee in Vermont? Locals share 6 favorites.

BUSINESS

"Amazombies": These unwanted packages are a nightmare for retailers.

COMICS.....INSERT
OBITUARIES.....C4
OPINION PAGES.....A18
WORLD.....A12

CONTENT © 2024
The Washington Post / Year 147, No. 53926

