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The Water’s Fine

After years of digging pipes and cisterns, not to mention suffering the slights of skeptics, Paris finally saw Olympic athletes dive into the Seine on Wednesday for the women’s and men’s triathlons. And for its patience, the host nation won a medal in each. Page B11.

Can You Beat the Olympians At Table Tennis? Stop Asking.

By ANDREW KEH

PARIS — Lily Zhang and three teammates from the United States table tennis team were hanging out on a large boat last Friday, making small talk with the N.B.A. star Stephen Curry — as one does at an Olympic opening ceremony — when he asked what sport they played.

They told him, and his eyes lit up.

“Can I borrow you for a second?” Curry asked.

Moments later, the four table tennis players found themselves engaged in a brief but spirited de-

bate with Curry and his teammate Anthony Edwards about whether Edwards, one of basketball’s brightest young talents, could notch a point against them on the table. The friendly trash talk was captured on camera and eventually watched by more than 15 million people online.

On one hand, the table tennis players said, it was one of those extraordinary, and extraordinarily funny, interactions that can happen only at the Olympics. On the other hand, they said, they have interactions like this all the time.



CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Amy Wang of the U.S. on Monday. Amateurs overrate their ability in the sport.

Everywhere they go, the world’s best table tennis players meet strangers who believe they can hold their own against them. They tell them they play “Ping-Pong,” too. They wonder aloud what the score would be, or even who would win. They suggest that they should play sometime.

This, alas, is the table tennis players’ cross to bear.

“You’ll meet someone, and their first reaction is, ‘I bet I can beat you, let’s play,’” Zhang said, laughing. “I don’t think you’d really say that to anyone in another sport. If you saw Michael Phelps, I don’t think you’d say, ‘I bet I can beat you in a race.’”

Zhang, 28, and her fellow players are good sports about it. They have to be. They know their game doesn’t have a huge following. They know many people think of it only as an idle pastime — and that

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At Journalists’ Meeting, Trump Questions Harris’s Race Identity

This article is by Jonathan Weisman, Maya King and Zolan Kanno-Youngs.

CHICAGO — Former President Donald J. Trump questioned Vice President Kamala Harris’s identity as a Black woman on Wednesday in front of an audience of Black journalists, suggesting his opponent for the presidency had adopted her racial profile as a way to gain a political advantage.

“She was Indian all the way, and then all of a sudden she made a turn and she became a Black person,” he said of Ms. Harris, whose mother was Indian American,

whose father is Black and who has always identified as a Black woman.

Ms. Harris has long embraced both her Black and South Asian identity. She attended Howard University, a historically Black institution, and pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha, the nation’s first sorority established for Black college women. Headlines from her earliest political victories dating back to the early 2000s highlighted both identities.

Mr. Trump’s remarks prompted gasps and jeers from the audience at the National Association of

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AKILAH TOWNSEND FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Donald J. Trump with Rachel Scott of ABC News, who was the moderator of the panel he appeared before on Wednesday.

IRAN VOWS TO SEEK REVENGE IN DEATH OF HAMAS LEADER

NEWS ANALYSIS

Twin Attacks Imperil Tense Equilibrium

By PATRICK KINGSLEY

JERUSALEM — Through nearly 10 months of intense war with Hamas in Gaza, Israel has fought a parallel, slower-paced conflict with Hamas’s allies across the Middle East in which all sides have risked major escalation but ultimately avoided dragging the region into a bigger, multi-front war.

The attacks on two of Israel’s leading foes on Tuesday and Wednesday have created one of the biggest challenges to that equilibrium since the fighting began in October.

Israel’s Tuesday night strike on Fuad Shukur, a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut, was a response to an attack on an Israeli-controlled town on Saturday that killed 12 children and teenagers. The strike on Beirut was the first time during this war that Israel has targeted such an influential Hezbollah leader in Lebanon’s capital. Hours later, the killing in Iran of Hamas’s political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was considered the most brazen breach of Iran’s defenses in years.

Taken together, the seniority of the targets, the sensitive location of the strikes and their near simultaneity were viewed as a particularly provocative escalation that has left the region fearing an even bigger response from Iran and its regional proxies, including Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen and militias in Iraq. The scale of that reaction could determine whether the low-level regional battle between Israel and the Iranian alliance tips into a full-scale, all-out conflict.

Iranian military commanders are considering a large combination attack of drones and ballistic missiles on military targets in Israel but would avoid striking civilian targets, three Iranian officials have said.

Still, while Iran and Hezbollah are likely to respond, they may yet choose methods that give Israel room to avoid further retaliation, at least for now, some analysts said. For months, Hezbollah has appeared wary of a war that would quite likely devastate Lebanon, while Iran — whose leadership has already said it will respond forcefully — may want to avoid actions that draw the United States into the conflict more directly. Both parties may also decide to view each assassination as a distinct event, rather than as a combined attack that requires a massive, joint response, analysts said.

Hezbollah will face pressure to respond because the strike on

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THE WEATHER

Today, sunny to partly cloudy, hot, humid, thunderstorms late, high 93. Tonight, clouds, humid, low 76. Tomorrow, hot, spotty thunderstorms, high 91. Weather map, Page A24.

Israel Remains Silent on Assassination, but Stands Firm

This article is by Patrick Kingsley, Adam Rasgon, Farnaz Fassihi and Ronen Bergman.

JERUSALEM — The predawn killing of a top Hamas leader in Tehran on Wednesday left the entire Middle East on edge, bringing vows of revenge from Iran’s leaders and threatening to derail fragile negotiations for a Gaza cease-fire.

The Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, 62, a top negotiator in the cease-fire talks who had led the militant group’s political office in Qatar, was killed after he and other leaders of Iranian-backed militant groups had attended the inauguration of Iran’s new president.

Israeli leaders would not confirm or deny whether their country was behind the brazen breach of Iran’s defenses. But Iranian leaders and Hamas officials immediately blamed Israel and



ARASH KHAMOOSHI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Tehran, protesting the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh.

vowed to avenge the death of Mr. Haniyeh, heightening fears of a broader regional war.

Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued an order for Iran to strike Israel directly, according to three Iranian officials briefed on the order.

And Iran’s new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, said in a statement on Wednesday, a day after he was sworn into office with Mr. Haniyeh seated in the front row: “We will make the occupying terrorist regime regret its action. Iran will defend its sovereignty, dignity, reputation and honor.”

In recent years, Israel has carried out several high-profile assassinations in Iran, rattling the country’s leaders. In November, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel told reporters that he had ordered the Mossad, Israel’s foreign intelligence service, to “act against the heads of Hamas, wherever they are.”

Hours before the killing of Mr. Haniyeh in the Iranian capital, Israeli fighter jets had carried out a

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Traffic Stops Fell in Pandemic, and Didn’t Return

By EMILY BADGER
and BEN BLATT

In the early days of the pandemic in 2020, traffic stops by the police plummeted around the country, as fewer cars were on the road and as agencies instructed officers to avoid nonessential contact with the public.

But in the months and years that followed, a distinct pattern formed in many cities: The cars came back in full force, but the traffic enforcement didn’t.

By the end of 2023, the police in Baltimore, New Orleans and San Francisco were making fewer than half the traffic stops they did

Rise in Road Fatalities and Reckless Driving

prepandemic. In other police departments that don’t publicly track stops, like Seattle’s and New York’s, the citations given during stops dropped off, too. The downturn appears even among some state agencies that monitor road safety on highways, like the Texas Highway Patrol and the Connecticut State Police.

This decline, seen in an Upshot analysis of local law enforcement data, accelerated a shift that be-

gan in many places before the pandemic, suggesting that the police have pulled back from a part of their job that has drawn especially sharp criticism. To many communities, traffic stops have led to racial discrimination, burdensome fines and deadly encounters — not road safety.

But the retreat of law enforcement from American roadways has also occurred against the backdrop of a rise in road fatalities.

It’s hard to draw a straight line from the decline of enforcement to the rise of road deaths, but their likely connection has unsettled re-

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9/11 Suspects Agree to Plea Deal at Guantánamo

By CAROL ROSENBERG

GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — The man accused of plotting the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and two of his accomplices have agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy and murder charges in exchange for a life sentence rather than a death-penalty trial at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Prosecutors said the deal was meant to bring some “finality and justice” to the case, particularly for the families of nearly 3,000 people who were killed in the attacks in New York City, at the Pentagon and in a Pennsylvania field.

Life Sentence for Three in Custody Since ’03

The defendants Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi reached the deal in talks with prosecutors across 27 months at Guantánamo and approved on Wednesday by a senior Pentagon official overseeing the war court.

The men have been in U.S. custody since 2003. But the case had become mired in more than a decade of pretrial proceedings that focused on the question of whether

their torture in secret C.I.A. prisons had contaminated the evidence against them.

Word of the deal emerged in a letter from war court prosecutors to Sept. 11 family members.

“In exchange for the removal of the death penalty as a possible punishment, these three accused have agreed to plead guilty to all of the charged offenses, including the murder of the 2,976 people listed in the charge sheet,” said the letter, which was signed by Rear Adm. Aaron C. Rugh, the chief prosecutor for military commissions and three lawyers on his team.

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INTERNATIONAL A4-14

Olympics in a Toxic Paradise

In 1974, a radioactive cloud drifted over Teahupo’o, Tahiti, now the surfing venue for the Paris Games. Page A11

Opinion Swings on Peace Deal

Polls and recent remarks by Ukraine’s leaders highlight a palpable shift in the conversation on peace talks. Page A14

NATIONAL A15-21

Lure of Ultraprocessed Foods

Understanding why some of our favorite snacks are so easy to overeat might be key to making them less harmful, some researchers say. Page A16

Can It Last for Democrats?

Democrats are buzzing since Kamala Harris entered the race against Donald J. Trump, but sustaining the momentum is the next challenge. Page A18

Grim Toll on Native Children

An investigative report documented more than 1,000 deaths and widespread sexual and physical abuse at federal boarding schools. Page A17



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On Firm Footing Again

On the Hawaiian islands, artisans have been reviving the age-old practice of turning tree leaves into mats. Page C1

Disney Comes for ‘Deadpool’

What’s “Deadpool & Wolverine”? Just another formulaic Marvel movie with a saucier rating, our writer says. Page C1

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Rate Cut Is ‘on the Table’

The Federal Reserve left interest rates unchanged while making it clear that a rate cut could be imminent, depending on economic data. Page B1

SPORTS B6-12

Ranking Teams’ Deadline Deals

The trade deadline was good to the Orioles, Tigers, Dodgers. But contenders like the Guardians and Astros weren’t aggressive enough. Page B12

OPINION A22-23

Chris Whipple

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THURSDAY STYLES D1-6

Winning Fashions in Paris

Outside the various Olympic venues, there has been no shortage of stylish outfits on display. Above, a foursome resplendent in marinières. Page D5

