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Democracy Dies in Darkness

MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024 • **\$3**

France punishes centrists in election

Le Pen's far-right coalition secures top spot in first round of votes

BY RICK NOACK,
EMILY RAUHALA,
ANNABELLE TIMSIT
AND ANTHONY FAIOLA

PARIS — French voters appeared to have boosted the prospects of the far right while potentially shattering the centrist alliance of President Emmanuel Macron, according to projections released after polls closed in the first round of French legislative elections on Sunday.

Projections by France's public broadcaster showed the far-right National Rally, guided by Marine Le Pen and her protégé, Jordan Bardella, comfortably securing the top spot with 33 percent of the national vote. An alliance of leftist parties, the New Popular Front, was in second, projected to garner 28 percent. Macron's Together alliance lagged behind, with 21 percent.

The projections showed National Rally narrowly falling short of a majority of seats. If it can expand its lead in the second round of voting on July 7, it could form the country's first far-right government since World War II, with 28-year-old Bardella as prime minister, and replace Macron's pro-Europe, pro-business agenda with its populist, euro-skeptic and anti-immigration platform.

Alternatively, a second-round result that doesn't produce a clear majority could paralyze French politics.

"The French crisis has only just started," said Gérard Araud, a former French ambassador to the United States.

Bardella pledged Sunday night to become "the prime minister of SEE FRANCE ON A9

Life in defiance of bombardment



SERHIY MORGUNOV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Karima and Serhiy Kovalenko embrace along Heroes of Ukraine Avenue in Kharkiv on June 21. Serhiy, a contract soldier, is fighting on the southern front and had just 10 days off to wed. Despite the constant threat of Russian bombing, residents of Ukraine's second-largest city are seeking joy in the traditions of early summer. **Story, A8**

As planet warms, mosquitoes carrying dengue may thrive

BY LENA H. SUN
AND SARAH KAPLAN

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — The curly-haired girl came to the emergency room with fever, aches and signs of dehydration, common indications of many childhood illnesses. But the 9-year-old — pale and listless beneath her Pokémon blanket — looked sicker than most children and exhibited no respiratory symptoms. She could only whimper as a pediatrician stroked her hair and softly

Puerto Rico's surge in cases provides warning about virus's spread

questioned her in Spanish.

The sharp-eyed doctor suspected dengue, a disease that is often missed but is now exploding around the world.

The girl, Genesis Polanco Marte, is among a record 10 mil-

lion people who have fallen ill with dengue so far this year — an unprecedented surge that scientists say is fueled in part by climate change. Soaring global temperatures have accelerated the life cycles and expanded the ranges of the mosquitoes that carry dengue, helping spread the virus to roughly 1 in every 800 people on the planet in the past six months alone. An influx of patients has overwhelmed hospitals from Brazil to Bangladesh, recalling the worst days of the coronavirus pan-

demic. Puerto Rico declared a public health emergency this spring, with more dengue cases reported in the first five months of 2024 than all of last year. Public health officials are bracing for the virus to crop up in more temperate regions, including the southernmost portions of the United States.

"The storm's comin', folks," Grayson Brown, executive director of the nonprofit Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit, advised a SEE DENGUE ON A7



ILLUSTRATION BY MIKYUNG LEE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

How one family escaped North Korea in a rickety boat on the open sea

BY MICHELLE YE HEE LEE
IN SEOUL

Hardly anyone has escaped from North Korea these past four years, since leader Kim Jong Un shuttered his country's border with China in the earliest days of the coronavirus pandemic.

But Kang Gyu-rin and her mother, aunt and a family friend are among the few. To do so, they used a perilous route that has become almost the only option for escape: by sea.

One night last October, the four boarded Kang's rickety wooden boat — with a rudimentary pumping system for bailing out the water — and set out for

South Korea. Or death.

"I was ready to die, so I wasn't afraid," said Kang, now 23. "We had to give it our best shot."

Kang and her mother, Kim Myung-sook, told The Washington Post about their life during the covid era and their decision to flee by sea, offering rare insight into how North Korea has changed in the past four years. The women changed their names after arriving in the South because they are escapees and wanted to protect family members back home. They spoke to The Post on the condition that SEE DEFECTORS ON A10

Meta's 'Supreme Court,' faced with a threat to funding, seeks a second act

BY NAOMI NIX

Last summer, the situation was dire for Meta's Oversight Board, an experimental court of journalists, analysts and experts empowered to investigate Meta's handling of controversial posts. Meta, its sole funder, had private-

ly threatened to pull back support, pushing the board to cut costs or seek new sources of revenue.

The Oversight Board had tried for years to find new clients, approaching YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest and a host of other tech companies without much luck,

according to half a dozen people familiar with the board's efforts, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private organizational matters. Many cited Meta's blemished reputation, noting that the board — launched with great fanfare in 2020 — had failed to improve the

social media giant's image.

Now, however, the Oversight Board may get a second chance. A sweeping European law, known as the Digital Services Act (DSA), requires tech companies to supply an independent group of experts to social media users seeking to appeal restrictions on their

accounts. And the board is offering itself up for the task.

The board's trust, an independent entity that oversees its finances, has funded a separate center to handle an influx of European user appeals, some of the people said. Thomas Hughes, the former SEE META ON A13

IN THE NEWS

Bannon heading to prison The sometime Trump adviser discussed the presidential race in an interview as he prepares to serve his sentence for contempt of Congress. **A2**

A new surrealism? AI has unleashed a wave of images that are too weird to be legitimate but real enough to stir feelings. **C1**

THE NATION
A U.S. airman ended his 22-year military career after an Israeli strike killed his aunt. **A3**
The Biden administration paused collection on some student loans for millions of borrowers. **A5**

Trump advisers are pushing to simplify the official GOP platform. **A5**

THE WORLD
Health officials in Gaza warned that remaining hospitals will soon stop working. **A11**

THE ECONOMY
If you Google "guacamole," there's a good chance your top result will be Lisa Bryan's recipe. She's worried that AI will change that. **A12**

THE REGION
A host of new laws and policies are taking effect in the District, Maryland and Virginia. **B1**

A Maryland family has spent the past decade teaching police how to interact with people with autism, a mission that now faces an uncertain future. **B1**
Two tech executives indicted alongside a retired admiral in an alleged bribery scheme are fighting the charges. **B1**

STYLE
A new congressional caucus aims to raise awareness of fast fashion's negative impact. **C1**

SPORTS
The U.S. women's gymnastics team bound for Paris is set: Simone Biles, Sunisa Lee, Jade Carey, Jordan Chiles and Hezly Rivera. **D1**

ELECTION 2024

A push to save Biden's 2024 bid

DEBATE PROMPTS FRENZIED EFFORTS

Allies work to reassure, calm anxious Democrats

BY TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA,
TYLER PAGER
AND MICHAEL SCHERER

Publicly, President Biden's allies have spent the past several days aggressively downplaying his missteps in Thursday's debate by assailing the "bedwetting brigade" of anxious Democrats, trumpeting a record influx of campaign donations and noting the long list of incumbents who stumbled during their first debates.

Privately, they have worked the phones to reassure nervous donors, pleaded with concerned lawmakers to keep their powder dry and huddled with colleagues to commiserate — while steeling themselves for a battle that could determine not only whether Biden wins the election in November, but also whether he will be on the ballot at all.

The push to save Biden's candidacy, which continued Sunday at a Camp David retreat with the SEE BIDEN ON A4



Biden

Aides point to rigorous coaching for debate

Months of preparation are under scrutiny after president's performance

BY TYLER PAGER

CAMP DAVID, MD. — President Biden's debate prep went fine.

In the sessions, the president still spoke haltingly. He sometimes confused facts and figures. He tripped over words and meandered. Debate prep would not fix his stutter or make him appear any younger, aides knew.

But as Biden boarded Marine One to leave the rustic Camp David presidential retreat for Atlanta, they sought to reassure anxious allies. The president, they said, was prepared and would perform well. Some said the debate might even be boring.

This story is based on conversations with eight individuals involved in or briefed on the president's debate preparation, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private meetings. The Biden campaign declined to comment.

For a full week, the president sequestered himself at Camp David with more than a dozen aides to prepare for Thursday's presidential debate with former president Donald Trump. He SEE DEBATE ON A4

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