



SIMONE RISOLUTI Vatican Media

MESSENGER OF PEACE

After celebrating his first Easter Mass, Pope Leo XIV delivers his holiday message from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. "Let those who have weapons lay them down!" he implored. **WORLD, A2**

In L.A. mayoral contest, change is the word

Bass and Raman say they'll shake things up. Three newcomers promise the same.

BY DAVID ZAHNISER

Mayor Karen Bass has had a lengthy political career, spending six years in the state Legislature, 12 years in Congress and the last three in the top elected office at Los Angeles City Hall.

Now, facing the toughest reelection battle of her career, Bass is marketing herself in a way that might surprise some Angelenos: She's running as a champion of change.

And she's not alone. City Councilmember Nithya Raman, who has represented a Hollywood Hills district since 2020, says her last-minute decision to enter the race was fueled by "a sense of urgency that things needed to change."

Three other major candidates, all political newcomers, argue that an outsider is needed to shake up the status quo.

"We can no longer keep our city together with duct tape and slurry," Rae Huang, a leftist community organizer, said at a recent candidate forum on housing and transportation.

The race to embrace the mantle of change in the June 2 primary election comes at a moment of political peril for Bass, a veteran Democrat who has racked up high disapproval numbers in several voter surveys.

In recent months, Bass has revamped her messaging, saying she's been tackling problems that have "been around for multiple decades," such as homelessness, sluggish police hiring and trash-strewn streets.

Last week, speaking to the Pacific Palisades Democratic Club, Bass said she wants another four years to finish that work. She also implied that, in her zeal to fix the city's problems, she quietly pushed out a dozen high-level bureaucrats, including those who dealt with trash pickup and police recruitment.

"Let me just tell you that in three years and three months, it is difficult to change what has been a practice for over four decades," Bass told the group. "I am very clear that there needs to be massive change, and I've done a lot of change."

Raman has portrayed herself as someone who [See Change, A6]

Mexico downplays the missing, stoking anger

Critics see a bid to 'disappear the disappeared'

BY PATRICK J. McDONNELL AND CECILIA SÁNCHEZ VIDAL

MEXICO CITY — The goal, say Mexican authorities, was to bring clarity to one of the nation's most explosive questions: What happened to the more than 130,000 people officially listed as "disappeared"?

Their faces are pasted on walls and lampposts across Mexico, and demonstrators regularly hoist banners demanding the return of loved ones whose names are memorialized in chants.

Now, a yearlong government study has sparked a contentious new round of debate about the disappeared.

The review concludes that the 130,000 number is highly inflated and includes

tens of thousands who may be alive — or ended up on the list without having been properly identified in the first place.

Other names are probably duplicates, the government says, while some people may have gone off the grid voluntarily for personal reasons.

Human rights activists and relatives of the missing quickly denounced the report as a cover-up — the latest attempt to "disappear the disappeared."

"This report is a farce, a joke," said Raúl Servín, part of a citizens group that searches for the missing in the western state of Jalisco, which regularly ranks near the top in disappearances. "The government doesn't like people talking about the disappeared — but they can't hide it."

[See Mexico, A3]



RONALDO BOLAÑOS Los Angeles Times

BRUINS coach Cori Close and her team revel after defeating South Carolina.

Voices BILL PLASCHKE COLUMNIST

UCLA women triumph to take title, in Wooden-like fashion

It was dominating. It was overwhelming. It was powder-blue pummeling, eight-clap crushing, Westwood wonderful.

It was the UCLA women's basketball team needing barely two hours to complete the struggles of 45 years, a stunningly swarming triumph unmatched in even the finest of Bruins athletic traditions.

Break out a new banner. Make room in the Pauley rafters. A new collection of

heroes is coming home, and they started the party early.

For the first time since 1978, and the first time in the NCAA era, the UCLA women are national basketball champions after a 79-51 finals blowout victory Sunday over favored powerhouse South Carolina.

"Oh my gosh," said weeping star Lauren Betts after the final buzzer.

Oh my, Lauren. This was a heartfelt triumph for the towering tournament Most [See Plaschke, A6]

Rout by Bruins leaves no doubt

They hold South Carolina to season-low 51 points in title-game blowout. **SPORTS, D1**

Dream comes true for UCLA's Jaquez

Senior becomes national champion with family on hand, Mirjam Swanson writes. **SPORTS, D1**

Hotline assists autistic people

The 988 Lifeline aims to help a population more likely to experience suicidal crisis. **NATION, A4**

A forgotten love song resurfaces

Shira Small's one album from 1974 is drawing unexpected attention. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

Weather

Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 79/57. **B6**



Daring rescue and a profane Trump threat

He says 'we're blowing up the whole country' if strait stays shut. U.S. airman is hurt but safe.

BY MICHAEL WILNER AND NABIH BULOS

WASHINGTON — An audacious operation Saturday night deep inside Iran rescued an American officer whose fighter jet had gone down behind enemy lines, a dramatic mission involving hundreds of U.S. soldiers that underscored the ongoing dangers of President Trump's war.

Early on Easter Sunday morning, the president celebrated the mission as one of the most daring of its kind in U.S. history. But he was angrily threatening to escalate the conflict only hours later, warning Iran with expletives that he would order strikes against its vital infrastructure unless it agreed by Tuesday to allow all mar-

itime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran," Trump wrote on his social media website. "There will be nothing like it!!! Open the Fuckin' Strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in Hell - JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah."

It was a precarious moment in a war the Trump administration repeatedly vowed would be over by now. Yet, more than five weeks after joint U.S. and Israeli strikes began, the president has struggled to identify a clear endgame.

New dangers have emerged on the battlefield, demonstrated by the downing of two U.S. aircraft Friday, prompting a series of risky rescue missions, including the expansive operation Saturday that retrieved a missing weapons systems officer.

The Islamic Republic's stockpile of fissile material, [See Iran, A3]

AVIATOR SAVED: A CIA deception campaign leads to the rescue of a wounded airman in Iran. **WORLD, A2**

IRANIANS DETAINED: The U.S. has arrested two L.A.-based relatives of a slain general. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Witness in drug smuggling case deported by ICE

BY JAMES QUEALLY

For Javier Hernandez, cooperating with federal prosecutors felt like the only option.

Hernandez, 48, faced up to life in prison after U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and Fontana police arrested him and seized nearly 22 pounds of meth during a 2015 operation targeting cross-border drug smuggling. Recovering from drug addiction and desperate to avoid being separated from his family, he would do whatever it took to minimize his sentence — even testifying against people he feared were connected to the cartels.

Then, a year before Hernandez was set to testify, he received an email with a list of his loved ones, according to a copy of the message reviewed by The Times. At the bottom of the message was a picture of a dead man, his body covered in bandages

and stained with blood.

Hernandez said he and his wife were terrified. But fear of retribution wasn't what kept him from taking the witness stand last year. It was Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Six months before trial, ICE agents detained Hernandez in San Bernardino, court records show. In March 2025, he was deported to Tijuana. ICE did not consult with federal prosecutors in Los Angeles before moving to deport their witness, U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder said during a hearing last year.

Without Hernandez's testimony to bolster the prosecution's case, his co-defendants were acquitted of all charges.

Former ICE officials and ex-federal prosecutors say the case highlights how the Trump administration has prioritized deportation efforts over other forms of law enforcement, even serious [See Detainee, A7]

He's sorry not sorry for \$10-a-gallon gas

BY SALVADOR HERNANDEZ

The owner of Gordia by the Sea, the lone gas station for several miles in any direction from this remote, scenic hamlet in Big Sur, is charging \$9.99 for a gallon of gas because, well, that's as high as the digital numbers on the gas pumps allow.

"The software only goes to \$10," said Leo Flores, owner of the gas station and mini-market. "I know, sometimes someone wants to make a good story because of it, but we have to tell you why."

As the lone gas station for at least 12 miles along Highway 1, the service station often prompts drivers to gasp or clutch their wallets at the sight of a \$9.99 price tag for a gallon, but Flores insists he's not trying to price-gouge his customers.

In fact, he's worried that if gas prices go much higher,

it might put him out of business.

"People think you make money, but I'm not," he said in an interview with The Times.

Motorists across the country have been griping since gasoline prices began to surge last month after the start of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, which restricted the flow of oil from key oil-producing countries.

Flores' business is an example of how skyrocketing fuel prices are having ripple effects throughout the economy.

The isolated gas station has been featured in the news in the past for its high prices, but Flores, who has owned the station for the last 30 years, said there's a simple reason why the cost is so high.

"We run this place on generators," he said. "The generators run on five to six gallons of gasoline every hour." [See Gas, A8]