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PRESIDENT Trump speaks before the U.N. General Assembly. “Do I drive them into hell?” he said of Iran.

TRUMP STEPS UP THREATS AGAINST TEHRAN

The president says the U.S. will ‘annihilate’ Iran if it doesn’t make a nuclear arms deal.

By MICHAEL WILNER AND ANA CEBALLOS

NEW YORK — President Trump threatened to “annihilate” Iran if it fails to negotiate a deal over its nuclear program, delivering a defensive speech justifying the mission at the United Nations on Tuesday.

His remarks come more than six months into a war that has grown increasingly unpopular at home, with fewer than a third of Americans approving of the president’s handling of the conflict, according to recent polls.

“I have a big decision to make,” he told world leaders gathered at the U.N. General Assembly in New York, with Iranian diplomats in attendance.

“Will a deal be made with Iran that lets them rebuild and create a far greater country than it ever was before — maybe one of the greatest in the Middle East or even the world? Or do I annihilate the Islamic Republic, and do it quickly, never giving them a chance to kill and destroy again?”

“Do I drive them into hell,” he continued, “with no chance of survival and no hope of future greatness?”

The war has carried steep political costs for the president and his party ahead of the U.S. midterm elections in November, increasing inflation and energy prices due to disruptions in commercial shipping traffic through key waterways in the Middle East.

Defense officials say the conflict has also placed a huge burden on U.S. munitions stockpiles, as Iran continues firing ballistic missiles and drones at American assets and bases throughout the region.

But Trump denied that the war has depleted U.S. stocks. “That’s not true,” he said.

“I believe we’ll make a deal right after the election,” Trump said. “We must be equally united in maintaining pressure.”

The rise in global gas prices has sparked protests around the world. But Trump’s vow to ensure Tehran never acquires a nuclear weapon — an issue that for decades united the international community — generated applause throughout the chamber.

Launching the war on Iran in February, Trump projected the campaign [See **Trump**, A7]

Some fault handling of state’s Paramount deal

By KEVIN RECTOR, MEG JAMES AND TARYN LUNA

California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta’s deal to allow the \$11-billion Paramount-Warner Bros. merger to proceed was struck amid political pressure from state leaders and concern from some Democratic attorneys general that concessions from the studio fell short, according to multiple sources familiar with the negotiations.

As recently as this weekend, New York Atty. Gen. Letitia James and Connecticut Atty. Gen. William Tong — who had signed on to the lawsuit — had said they needed more concessions, according to three knowledgeable sources close to the

negotiations.

In an interview with The Times on Tuesday, Tong said Bonta was “doing his very best in very difficult circumstances” to steer the coalition to a favorable outcome, but amid “a lot of political pressure” from others in California that “did not help.”

“I’m not going to sugarcoat it. This is ultimately not what I wanted,” Tong said.

Tong said one of his chief concerns — shared by others in the 12-member coalition of states — was with the merger’s consolidation of CNN and CBS News under [See **Paramount**, A12]

EDITORIAL BOARD: Merger settlement critics ask whether a new panel overseeing CNN and CBS News will be truly independent. **BUSINESS, A11**

Apartments don’t pencil out

Why developers aren’t building in housing-starved L.A.

By JACK FLEMMING

In 2021, developer Paul Schon was paid \$6.5 million for a 14-unit Hollywood apartment building he constructed. Over the next five years, much of Los Angeles’ multifamily market imploded.

Schon just bought the building back for \$4.75 million.

“This is a live example of what happened to L.A. apartment building values in the last few years,” he said.

A 30% drop in half a decade seems shocking, but it’s now the norm. In 2022, the average sale price per unit in new and existing multifamily buildings in L.A. County was \$397,289, according to commercial real estate firm Kidder Mathews. In 2026, it’s down to \$280,591.

The city of L.A. is suffering from a housing shortage. The state is practically begging it to build more homes, and Mayor Karen Bass implemented a faster permitting process this year. But Schon and a growing number of developers across L.A. say that building new apartments simply isn’t an option at the moment.

Projects don’t pencil. [See **Apartments**, A8]



City of Huntington Beach

TWO olive ridley sea turtles, this one in Huntington Beach, have appeared north of usual nesting grounds.

First sea turtle eggs laid on West Coast

By CORINNE PURTILL

The turtle crawled out of the sea on Sept. 16 and made her way to a patch of sand between the waves and the oceanfront condos on Surfside Avenue in Seal Beach.

The olive ridley sea turtle dug a pit in the sand and deposited a clutch of eggs. Then she was gone back into the sea, leaving behind stunned lifeguards and the first known natural sea turtle nest on the U.S. West Coast.

Then three days later, about eight miles down the

beach, a second turtle sighting. Just south of Tower 15 in Huntington Beach, another olive ridley clambered onto shore. She cleared a hole in the sand, laid her eggs and slipped back into the ocean.

But their appearances in front of surprised Southern California beachgoers is a historic first, in an era when the climate is regularly surprising even those who know it best.

“I have been expecting to see subtropical species present off the coast of Southern California, which is typi- [See **Sea turtles**, A10]

Raman takes big lead over Bass in mayoral race poll

Council member is favored by 39% versus 28%. But 33% of likely voters are undecided.

By NOAH GOLDBERG

Los Angeles Councilmember Nithya Raman has taken a wide lead over incumbent Karen Bass in the L.A. mayor’s race, according to a poll released Wednesday, although a high percentage of voters remain undecided less than two weeks before mail-in ballots are sent out for the Nov. 3 election.

Raman is favored by 39% of likely L.A. voters, compared with 28% for Bass, according to the poll by the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies, which was co-sponsored by The Times. The poll found that 33% of voters were undecided.

“Raman clearly has the advantage. Her task is a little less onerous than Bass’,” said Mark DiCamillo, the director of the Berkeley IGS Poll.

Adding to Bass’ low poll numbers are high unfavorability ratings.

The mayor had 63% unfavorable ratings, the poll found, with 28% favorable

and 9% having no opinion. By comparison, 40% had a favorable view of Raman, according to the poll, while 39% said they had an unfavorable view of her and 21% had no opinion.

The survey was conducted online with a sample of 2,150 likely city voters between Sept. 15 and Sept. 20. It has a margin of error of about 3 percentage points.

The poll represented the strongest showing yet for Raman, who trailed Bass in almost every poll during the primary campaign and who came in second to Bass in the primary election, with 29% of the vote compared with Bass’ 34%.

Even so, DiCamillo said the large number of undecided voters means the race is far from over.

“It’s extraordinarily unusual to see this many undecided voters at this point in the race,” he said.

Mail-in ballots will be sent out beginning Oct. 1, local elections officials say.

The large number of undecided voters can be linked to the elimination of mayoral candidate Spencer Pratt in the June 2 primary, according to DiCamillo.

The former reality TV star received 26% of the vote in the primary, and most of the voters who cast ballots [See **Poll**, A8]

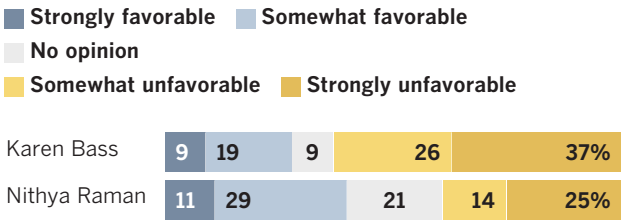
Six weeks to make their case

Where the mayoral race stands

Whom L.A. likely voters support for mayor



Majority of likely voters view Bass unfavorably



Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies survey of 2,150 likely voters in L.A. was conducted online Sept. 15-20. Responses have a sampling error of about +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

HANNA SENDER Los Angeles Times

Humidity boosting West Nile cases

Mosquitoes are thriving in Southern California amid El Niño-fueled weather.

By KAREN GARCIA

Southern California’s unprecedented humidity fueled by El Niño conditions is giving a boost to mosquitoes and helping spread West Nile virus, experts say.

West Nile virus cases in Los Angeles County are the highest they’ve been in more than a decade, records show.

The surge is due in part to Southern California’s sweltering summer, with record-breaking humidity coupled with extreme heat that’s being shepherded in by El Niño conditions in the Pacific, which are fueling hurricanes that send moisture to California.

The lifespan of a mosquito is dependent on several factors including species, temperature, humidity, gender and time of year, according to the Mosquito and Vector Control Assn. of California.

“Mosquitoes really need humidity because otherwise they desiccate,” said Dr. Photini Sinnis with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Their lifespan is determined by humidity, so if you have humidity, the infected mosquitoes will live longer and infect

more people.”

Southern California had some of the worst humidity ever recorded for the region this summer, experts said, which made already hot temperatures feel oppressive, sparking health concerns.

And in that humidity, mosquitoes were breeding — and biting.

“Mosquitoes are not long lived, but they can live for a few weeks and they’ll take a blood meal every four days,” Sinnis said.

This year, Los Angeles County has seen 100 cases of West Nile virus, resulting in five deaths, the county’s Department of Public Health said. In comparison, there were only 22 cases and two deaths all of last year.

Of the county’s 100 cases, 73 were men, 27 were women, and the median patient age was 64.5, according to a Sept. 18 epidemiology report. Of this year’s cases, about 90 people were diagnosed with a neuroinvasive disease, a condition that results in the brain and surrounding tissues becoming inflamed, possibly leading to permanent brain damage and even death, according to the Mayo Clinic.

About a third of all infected persons reside in East Los Angeles, with other cases reported in the San Fernando Valley and South Bay, according to the recent epidemiology report.

[See **West Nile**, A10]

