



Photographs by ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

**OVER 700** immigrants celebrate after being sworn in as U.S. citizens at a naturalization ceremony at the Fox Performing Arts Center in Riverside. Many immigrants want to be able to vote in the upcoming election.

## New citizens, a crucial election

U.S. is approving applications quickly. Voting is a motivation for many immigrants.

By ANDREA CASTILLO AND ALEX WIGGLESWORTH

Hundreds of people from 63 countries packed into a Riverside theater recently to take the oath of citizenship. American flags lined the stage as messages conveying the immigrants' new power played on a large screen:



**IMMIGRANTS SING** the national anthem before being sworn in as U.S. citizens on Sept. 18.

"Today, I am an American. Today, I am a citizen of the country I serve. Today, I can register to vote."

The 775 people who participated in the naturalization ceremony Sept. 18 are part of a wave of new U.S. citizens being sworn in across the country, as immigration authorities approve citizenship applications at the fastest speed in a decade.

The Biden administration says the uptick in new citizens is due to efforts to reduce a backlog of applications that began during the

## VP nominees share humble roots but take different paths

JD Vance's 'America first' agenda contrasts with Tim Walz's more moderate profile.

By JAMES RAINEY AND SEEMA MEHTA

Many voters know little about Ohio Sen. JD Vance and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the men selected to be one heartbeat away from the presidency. That's not uncommon for vice presidential candidates, who rarely have a major effect on the outcome of races for the White House.

But the tightness of the 2024 election, potentially coming down to a small number of votes in a handful of battleground states, means extra scrutiny is be-

ing paid to Walz's and Vance's first and only debate, scheduled for Tuesday. Given former President Trump's refusal to debate Vice President Kamala Harris again, the clash between their running mates — in front of the largest audience since they were chosen — could be the last time many voters hear directly from candidates on the GOP and Democratic tickets.

The race will come down to which party can drive more of its voters to the ballot box, with marginal swings potentially having an outsized effect, said Elaine C. Kamarck, senior fellow at the center-left Brookings Institution.

"This race is incredibly close in some of the swing states," she said. "The problem with these kinds of races [See Nominees, A7]

## Assassination of Hezbollah leader lamented, hailed

The Lebanese group and Israel confirm his death, intensifying fears of a wider war.

By NABIH BULOS, LAURA KING AND TRACY WILKINSON

BEIRUT — The assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah — confirmed by both Israel and the Lebanese militant group on Saturday, a day after the massive air raid that killed him — set off furious grief among his followers and prompted grim satisfaction in Israel, redoubling fears of

a widening regional conflict. The 64-year-old Nasrallah, who had led the Iranian-backed group for more than three decades, died in a devastating Israeli strike Friday evening in Beirut's southern suburbs, according to announcements issued hours apart by the Israeli military and Hezbollah, the paramilitary force and political party he helped found.

For more than 24 hours after Friday's air raid, Israeli warplanes continued to pummel Hezbollah-dominated neighborhoods on the city's southern outskirts, leaving the Lebanese capital shrouded in choking smoke and lending an apocalyptic [See Mideast, A9]

## New railway is a line of disagreement

The train across a jungle has come to symbolize Mexican leader's presidency.

By KATE LINTHICUM

MÉRIDA, Mexico — As the sleek new train pulled out of the station in Cancun and sped into the dense Mexican jungle, Mario Meneses held his camera to the

window, capturing it all on video. The 61-year-old tour guide beamed with pride — and the sense that he was documenting history.

"You'll see," he told his family. "This train is going to bring people from all over the world."

His sister Patricia, 63, scoffed. "How will this ever be profitable?" she asked, pointing to row after row of open seats. "It's completely empty."

How Mexicans feel about

the Tren Maya (Maya Train) — a 1,000-mile railway that slices through the Yucatán — has a lot to do with how they feel about the man who built it.

The \$30-billion train is the signature project of outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who promises that it will become a major draw for tourists and an economic engine for southern Mexico. In many ways it has come to symbolize the presidency of an am-

bitious, often divisive leader obsessed with cementing his legacy.

A populist leftist who vowed to put "the poor first" and correct historical wrongs against the Indigenous population, López Obrador hopes to be remembered as a leader who tipped the balance of power to the working class, away from the elites.

The train, he said, would pump resources into a re-

## A powerful pastor accused of sex trafficking

Forced labor, child abuse, rape alleged within Kingdom of Jesus Christ

By NOAH GOLDBERG

It was New Year's Eve 1999, and Arlene Stone was convinced the world was going to end. Jesus Christ was going to come down from a cloud, and she would go to heaven.

That's what Stone said she and other members of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ had been told by their spiritual leader, Apollo Quiboloy, known by his followers as the "Appointed Son of God" or "Owner of the Universe." Ever since joining his group in 1991 as a young teen in the Philippines, Stone had adhered to Quiboloy's teachings. She believed him.

But Jesus Christ made no appearance that night at the Kingdom's compound in Davao City. Instead, she said, there were two fog machines blasting and Quiboloy — who descended [See Quiboloy, A16]



AARON FAVILA Associated Press

**APOLLO QUIBOLOY**, the "spiritual guide" of former Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, was arrested by Filipino authorities and faces charges in California.



SHELBY MOORE For The Times

### L.A. IS STACKED

Doesn't a sandwich sound good for lunch? Our Food staff picks 32 local favorites. **WEEKEND, L6**

### Harris touts border security

The vice president addressed immigration reform efforts after a visit to southernmost Arizona. **NATION, A6**

### Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 79/59. **B10**

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.

### USC survives sloppy game

Trojans commit many mistakes but emerge with a 38-21 win over Wisconsin. **SPORTS, D1**

For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.



Get more of the news you need.  
Download the app.

