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GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

A PEDESTRIAN passes Walt Disney Concert Hall downtown, where signs of recovery are easy to spot.

Three powerful leaders, three disparate aims

Trump, Putin and Xi's talks may be more spectacle than historic Yalta-like conference.

BY MICHAEL WILNER

SEOUL — President Trump will get his wish for a historic meeting among the three most powerful men in the world — Xi Jinping of China, Vladimir Putin of Russia and himself — at a summit Thursday in southern China.

But Moscow, Beijing and Washington already know their leaders are arriving at the Shenzhen conference with disparate aims.

Trump hopes to focus the meeting on nuclear nonproliferation, urging the Russian and Chinese presidents to work with him to scale back the world's largest nuclear stockpiles. Putin pressed for the meeting to discuss his ongoing war in Ukraine. And Xi wants to discuss neither, only embracing the idea of the summit to show the world China can help broker peace on the international stage, Chinese officials told The Times.

"That'll be interesting," Trump said last week, teasing the trilateral summit before the White House formally confirmed the meeting Friday.

"We're talking a lot of things, including denuclearization," he added, "but we'll be talking a lot of things."

U.S. officials have acknowledged they do not expect the meeting to result in a breakthrough on arms control. China is openly racing to build up its nuclear capacity — a nonnegotiable policy in Beijing, which sees its arsenal dwarfed by an American stockpile nearly 10 times the size.

"We do not expect to get to any kind of agreement. I would characterize this as the entry point," one senior Trump administration official said. "This is the begin-

[See **China,** A4]

FAA struggles to locate cause of air crisis

Federal officials try to determine if human error or equipment failure led to collapse.

BY CLARA HARTER AND CONNOR SHEETS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation was working Saturday to determine whether Friday's air traffic control system meltdown resulted from human error or equipment failure as travelers across the nation continued to grapple with a cascade of flight delays and cancellations.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said the crisis began when a contractor was performing routine maintenance at a remote Federal Aviation Administration location to switch telecommunication lines from 1980s-era copper wire to a fiber line.

The new equipment began flooding other routers in the air traffic control system — sending more than 1,000 connection attempts every four to five seconds — causing radar and communications disruptions, he said. As a safety measure, the FAA decided to ground all planes for more than four hours.

It is unclear whether the contractor, L3Harris Technologies, or the piece of new equipment itself was at fault.

"This was an FAA system that didn't meet the moment," Duffy said. "A contractor didn't meet the moment or the equipment didn't meet the moment — and it caused the outages."

A spokesperson for L3Harris said the company is supporting the FAA in its investigation to understand the conditions that led to the ground stop. L3Harris said that safety and reliability are its highest priorities and

[See **FAA,** A8]

Fliers, keep these rules in mind

Passengers have rights if their trips are delayed or canceled. Here's what to know. **NATION, A8**

The reason for grounding flights

FAA says issues with its air traffic control system began during routine maintenance. **NATION, A8**

Downtown might finally be rebounding

Tenants are returning, graffiti is being scrubbed, restaurants are reopening and safety has improved

BY ROGER VINCENT

The mood in beleaguered downtown Los Angeles may — at last — be starting to shift.

Years of gloom, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, emptied office skyscrapers and sidewalks, but some data and deals suggest downtown could be staging a comeback.

Some signs are easy to spot, like construction on the $2.6-billion expansion of the Convention Center and the long-delayed cleaning of buildings dubbed Graffiti Towers, which had become an embarrassing symbol of neglect.

The exodus of office tenants has waned.

Vacant offices have been perhaps the biggest drag on downtown since its signature skyscrapers were temporarily closed by health decree during the pandemic. Many companies have returned on fewer days of the week than before and reduced the amount of space they occupy, as workers often do their jobs remotely. Other firms left downtown, in part because their employees no longer found the streets safe and appealing.

More than a third of office space has been vacant for the past few years, but the decline stopped in the third quarter, as slightly more space was rented than vacated, with the market seeing a net gain of 85,000 square feet, according to real estate brokerage CBRE.

"Finally we have hit the bottom and we're on the upswing," said CBRE office broker Chris Penrose. "We're starting to see some positive momentum."

"Solid" tenants with good credit are signing long-term leases, he said. "They wouldn't be making those decisions if things were really as bad as a lot of people like to paint that picture of downtown."

Beloved historic restaurants thought lost are reopening under new management. A new concert hall designed by legendary architect Frank Gehry will be

[See **Downtown,** A12]



MIGUEL FERNANDEZ FLORES

A MEXICAN soldier guards a street in Culiacán in Sinaloa state in 2025.

COLUMN ONE

'Everything is abandoned'

Entire towns in Mexico sit deserted after cartel war

By Keegan Hamilton | REPORTING FROM POTRERILLOS, MEXICO

When José Carlos González Alarcón steps out of his truck in this small town in the mountains of Sinaloa state, he is greeted by a pack of hungry dogs. A motley assortment of mixed breeds, they race up the empty streets, tails wagging at the arrival of a rare visitor.

The owners who once kept them well fed have long since fled, most taking only what they could carry. Important documents, family heirlooms and even pets were left behind in the panicked scramble for safety.

González whistles and the dogs gather around. He doles out a few scratches behind the ears but hasn't brought enough food for all of them.

Once home to a few hundred people, Potrerillos is now nearly deserted — a *pueblo fantasma,* or ghost town — one of many in a region where residents have abandoned their homes amid a brutal war between factions of the Sinaloa cartel.

[See **Cartel,** A6]

Olympics deal offers big cut for L.A. businesses

BY JAMES RAINEY AND ALENE TCHEKMEDYIAN

Top Los Angeles officials have reached what they are calling an unprecedented preliminary agreement to help businesses based within the city limits get a meaningful share of the estimated $4 billion in contracts needed to stage the 2028 Summer Olympics.

The deal offers the promise of substantial financial gains for the host city of the Olympics, without forcing event organizers to spend more than they believe is prudent, according to people familiar with the negotiations at City Hall and at LA28, the private nonprofit group organizing the Games.

The deal must still be given final approval by LA28, the City Council and mayor. The people involved spoke on condition of anonymity to describe delicate negotiations nearing completion.

The linchpin of the deal is a commitment by LA28 to spend between 5% and 20% of its overall contracting budget on businesses headquartered in the city of Los Angeles, according to two high-ranking city officials.

LA28 leaders previously estimated their spending with outside firms would total about $4 billion. Five percent of that would be $200 million, and 20% would be $800 million, which provides the range of what L.A.-based companies would stand to pick up as Los Angeles hosts

[See **Contracts,** A9]

State fire insurance plan bold but untested

Commissioner-elect's novel idea lacks key details, critics say. To her, it's starting point.

BY LAURENCE DARMIENTO

Former San Francisco Supervisor Jane Kim overcame her lack of name recognition to win the race to be California's next insurance commissioner by making a novel proposal: establishing a government-run wildfire program that would radically overhaul the state's troubled home insurance market.

Her Natural Disaster Insurance for All plan promises to make home insurance affordable and increase its availability by taking the profit motive out of the system, eliminating costs such as high executive salaries and, most importantly, having as a core mission the reduction of growing wildfire risks that have caused a series of catastrophic blazes in the last decade.

Those blazes — culminating in the Jan. 7, 2025, firestorms that destroyed more than 16,000 structures in the Pacific Palisades and Altadena areas alone — caused insurers to drop policyholders in fire-prone areas while raising rates, though statewide they remain near the nationwide average depending on the study.

As a consequence, the state's privately operated insurer of last resort, the California FAIR Plan, has seen residential policies more than double to 677,000 since 2022 even as it surcharged residential policyholders

[See **Kim,** A13]

Trojans' hopes for CFP crushed

No. 18 USC picks up costly penalties during a 27-13 loss to No. 9 Indiana. **SPORTS, D1**

Voters approve Proposition 42

Rebutting Prop. 40, the measure bans new taxes on an array of personal assets. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Recipes to make Thanksgiving

The Food staff shares its favorite dishes that define the holiday table. **WEEKEND, L3**

TODAY'S SECTIONS
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For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 73/59. **B8**

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