GARY KAZANJIAN For The Times

HOUSTON WILSON, a UC Riverside entomology researcher, examines a trap for navel orangeworms in an almond field in Parlier, Calif.

Farms fight a pesky almond moth with sex, radiation, 'mummies'

An experimental program that shuns pesticides seeks to protect California's crop by using X-rays to sterilize the damaging insects

By Noah Haggerty
REPORTING FROM PARLIER, CALIF.

In a windowless shack on the far outskirts of Fresno, an ominous red glow illuminates a lab filled with X-ray machines, shelves of glowing boxes, a quietly humming incubator and a miniature wind tunnel.

While the scene looks like something straight out of a sci-fi movie, it's actually part of an experimental program to prevent a damaging almond pest from successfully mating.

With California almond growers reeling from dropping nut prices and rising costs, the pests have only added to their woes.

Every year, the navel orangeworm eats through roughly 2% of California's almonds before they can make it to grocery store shelves. Last year, it was almost double that.

While that might seem small, if you do the math "it's going to be a lot of millions of dollars lost to this pest," said David Haviland, a Kern County farm advisor with University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. "And that's despite the control methods that people use," he said.

California produces 80% of the world's almonds, yet in 2022 the production value of the nut fell 34% compared with the previous year.

[See **Almond moth,** A10]

Five times the presidential rivals have changed their positions on an issue

By Noah Bierman | REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

Since 2020, Harris has tacked to center

Vice President Kamala Harris struggled to define herself when she ran for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

The party's base was demanding that candidates support Sen. Bernie Sanders' single-payer healthcare plan, and the energy among many activists focused on discriminatory policing practices and policies after the deaths of George Floyd and other men and women in encounters with police. Harris' views on these issues appeared to move along with those of the grassroots, but she often faced questions from the left about her level of conviction.

Where Harris is on the ideological spectrum has long been hard to pinpoint. After Joe Biden selected her as his running mate in 2020, she moved toward the center on some issues and has generally kept those positions since taking Biden's place atop the ticket in this year's election.

Harris has not explained many of her shifts. They may help her among moderate voters in the general election, but they have left her open to criticism from the right.

[See **Harris,** A7]

Photo illustration by NICOLE VAS Los Angeles Times;
Photos by MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times and EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

Trump mixes lies, shifts — and consistency

President Trump has a record of saying outrageous, contradictory and untrue things. Fact-checkers have found thousands of falsehoods he has asserted about many issues, including the state of the economy, the threats posed by immigrants and his achievements as president.

For example, he falsely claimed in his Sept. 10 debate with Vice President Kamala Harris that he had "saved" the Affordable Care Act when he was president, even though he spent most of his term in office trying to repeal the program, widely known as Obamacare. He continues to falsely claim the 2020 election was stolen. He regularly makes remarks that are provably untrue, such as when he said during a Sept. 30 visit to survey hurricane damage in Georgia that President Biden was not taking Republican Gov. Brian Kemp's calls. (Kemp and Biden both confirmed they had spoken.)

It can be difficult to separate Trump's false statements on any particular issue from a change in policy positions over time.

On some issues, including his

[See **Trump,** A7]

County's cycle of packing, building new jails

At nearly all moments in history, L.A. leaders have been expanding the carceral system or considering the idea.

By Keri Blakinger

When you think of a prison town, you probably think of a place like Huntsville, Texas. Or maybe Forrest City, Ark. Or Susanville, Calif. Even if you don't know them by name, you know the type: places where the population is half-incarcerated and virtually everyone works for or knows someone who works for a prison. In short, you probably do not think of a place like Los Angeles.

But maybe you should.

Technically, it's not a prison town. Though there are a few federal and state prisons for those convicted of serious crimes scattered across the county, the Southland's claim to carceral fame lies more in its jails. On an average day, the county's lockups hold close to 13,000 people. With roughly twice as many imprisoned people as are in New York's far more notorious Rikers Island complex, Los Angeles is home to the largest jail system in the most heavily incarcerated country in the world.

At nearly every moment in its history, Los Angeles has been either expanding an old jail, building a new one or debating whether to. The perpetual refrain of build, overcrowd, repeat hums in the background of the city's history like an aging neon sign.

Right now, that hum is growing a little louder as county leaders once again take up the question of whether to replace Men's Central. The crumbling downtown lockup mostly houses men awaiting trial or convicted of minor offenses;

[See **Jails,** A9]