



MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

**MOHAMMAD** Abu Harbei cooks sweets in Nablus, West Bank. The Palestinian National Economy Ministry last month recorded a loss of some \$25 million a day because of Israeli raids and settler attacks in the territory.

## Sweets slump reflects war-torn economy

West Bank reels amid an Israeli crackdown after the Oct. 7 attack and bombing of Gaza.

By NABIH BULOS

NABLUS, West Bank — What Sacher torte is to Vienna, or kouign-amann to Brittany, or cannoli to Sicily, knafeh Nabulseyeh is to Nablus.

The teeth-achingly sweet pastry is almost synonymous with this ancient city, the dessert (and commercial) capital of the occupied West Bank. Big wheels of the almost fluorescent orange delicacy — essentially a syrup-drenched Palestinian cheesecake — glisten in bakery windows, luring in the hungry and sugar-starved.

So it was little surprise to see a continuously replenishing crowd of customers lining up at Al Aqsa Sweets, Nablus' most popular dessert maker, and watching Khaled Abboud slice pieces of knafeh with practiced aplomb. It seemed like brisk business as he emerged from the kitchen with a fresh 2½-foot-wide tray of knafeh every 10 minutes. But the burly 28-year-old server was unimpressed.

"This? It's barely a third of what we'd normally sell," he said, his spatula chop-chop-chopping a trapezoidal piece of knafeh — exactly 4.4 ounces as advertised. [See **West Bank**, A4]

## HIGH-RISE PLANS SPLIT SANTA CRUZ

Officials say development would ease housing costs. Activists call the idea 'out of character' for the beach town and are fighting construction.

By James Rainey

SANTA CRUZ — You can sense it in the ubiquitous "Help Wanted" posters in artsy shops and restaurants, in the ranks of university students living out of their cars and in the outsize percentage of locals camping on the streets.

This seaside county known for its windswept beauty and easy living is in the midst of one of the most serious housing crises anywhere in home-starved California. Santa Cruz County, home to a beloved surf break and a bohemian University of California campus, also claims the state's highest rate of homelessness and, by one measure based on local incomes, its least affordable housing.

Leaders in the city of Santa Cruz have responded to this hardship in a land of

plenty — and to new state laws demanding construction of more affordable housing — with a plan to build up rather than out.

A downtown long centered on quaint sycamore-lined Pacific Avenue has boomed with new construction in recent years. Shining glass and metal apartment complexes sprout in multiple locations, across a streetscape once dominated by 20th century classics such as the Art Deco-inspired Palomar Inn apartments.

And the City Council and planning department envision building even bigger and higher, with high-rise apartments of up to 12 stories in the southern section of downtown that [See **Santa Cruz**, A7]



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**THE SAN** Lorenzo River flows past Kaiser Permanente Arena, home of the Santa Cruz Warriors, in an area where the city plans high-rise development.

## Man with no passport, ticket flies to L.A.

By RICHARD WINTON

Without a passport or even a ticket, a mysterious man with apparent ties to Russia slipped onto a flight from Copenhagen to Los Angeles, hiding in plain sight until he was apprehended after landing in Los Angeles, an extraordinary federal criminal filing reveals.

The man, identified as Sergey Vladimirovich Ochigava, a seemingly gregarious flier who constantly shifted seats, spoke to several passengers, asked for two in-flight meals and even tried to snack on a cabin crew member's chocolate bar during the more than 12-hour flight aboard Scandinavian Airlines Flight 931 on Nov. 4, court documents

filed by federal prosecutors allege.

But when he disembarked at Los Angeles International Airport around 1 p.m., officials quickly discovered he was a stowaway without a passport and not listed on the passenger manifest, and he was taken into custody, according to a federal court filing. He carried domestic identification for

Russia and Israel that said he was born in 1977.

After an FBI investigation, Ochigava pleaded not guilty earlier this month to violating a federal law that prevents anyone from boarding or secreting themselves on an airplane or vessel without the consent of the owner or person in command. [See **Stowaway**, A9]

## L.A. County's push to address sex abuse suits

Deluge of claims has led to a crackdown on probation staff at juvenile facilities.

By REBECCA ELLIS

The girls said they were molested in bed and raped in an administrative office, leered at in the communal shower and surveilled in the bathroom.

If they told, they said, they were threatened with solitary confinement and revoked phone privileges. If they stayed quiet, they might get out a few weeks early.

Starting in the late 1990s, the complaints by young girls incarcerated at Camp Scott began to pile up — all alleging similar sexual abuse by the same man: Thomas E. Jackson, then a deputy at the Santa Clarita juvenile camp.

Eventually, the complaints all stalled. The girls

finished their sentences and left. Jackson stayed for decades.

It wasn't until this fall that Jackson resigned from the Los Angeles County Probation Department, capping a 33-year career during which 20 women say he sexually abused them when they were girls. His last day was Sept. 28.

Ernest Walker, a long-time probation supervisor, resigned two days later, also after 33 years with the department. His departure would come nearly two decades after he was accused of having sex with a teenage girl he supervised.

Faced with roughly 1,500 plaintiffs accusing the county of tolerating unchecked sexual abuse at its juvenile facilities, the Probation Department has spent the last two years removing alleged sexual abusers from its ranks. Since early 2022, 23 probation staffers — including Walker and Jackson — have been placed on leave after [See **Juveniles**, A6]



FRANCINE ORR Los Angeles Times

**MEGAN COSTELLO** tried in vain to get the RSV shot while pregnant. Infant shots are in short supply.

## Moms-to-be find RSV shots elusive

Many who sought vaccine to pass on protection in utero have faced hurdles.

By EMILY ALPERT REYES

When Megan Costello heard on the radio this fall that a newly approved vaccine for pregnant people could protect their babies from RSV, the Los Angeles resident immediately started asking how she could get the shot.

As a person with asthma, Costello said, she takes any kind of respiratory infection very seriously. So does her husband, whose family lost a child to pneumonia.

The one-time shot would protect her son against respiratory syncytial virus, which has long been the leading cause of hospitalization for infants in the United States.

But despite her eager-

ness to get vaccinated, the 38-year-old architect kept running into stumbling blocks — and ultimately missed her chance to get the shot while pregnant. Meanwhile, health officials were warning that another set of new immunizations for RSV — those given directly to infants — were in short supply.

Pediatricians "have been waiting for many decades to have an immunization to prevent RSV, and now we have two, but both have these huge barriers to delivery right now," said Dr. Sean O'Leary, a pediatric infectious-disease specialist at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus who researches barriers to vaccination.

The shots have been hailed as a game changer for RSV, an illness that crowds pediatric wards in fall and winter and causes tens of thousands of young children in the U.S. to be hospitalized annually. The virus can [See **RSV vaccines**, A9]

### Biden warns Israel on Gaza offensive

President says the "indiscriminate bombing" is costing Israel international support. **NATION, A5**

### Too late to save Suehiro Cafe

Little Tokyo institution is evicted amid protests, just weeks before L.A.'s legacy business program starts. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Weather

Santa Ana winds; sunny. L.A. Basin: 70/49. **B6**

### Gassy cattle and climate change

Altered diets show promise at curbing the warming methane cows release. **BUSINESS, A8**



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