



Photographs by MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

**THE ARATINA** Solar Project will involve the removal of 3,500 of the 4,700 Joshua trees on the site. The one above is 150 to 200 years old.

# Killing Joshua trees to save planet?

Thousands of the protected species will be removed to make way for a solar project in Mojave Desert. Developers say its benefits will outweigh the loss.

By MELODY PETERSEN

BORON, Calif. — A renewable energy company will soon begin clearing thousands of protected Joshua trees just outside this desert town, including many thought to be a century old, to make way for a sprawling solar project that will generate power for 180,000 homes in wealthier coastal neighborhoods.

The 2,300-acre project has angered residents of Boron and nearby Desert Lake, two small Kern County towns where the poverty rate is twice the California average. Residents say their concerns about construction dust, as well as the destruction of the mostly pristine land that is habitat for endangered desert tortoises, have been



**MELANIE RICHARDSON** and other Boron residents are concerned that dust from construction of the solar farm will spread valley fever in their community.

ignored by the county and state officials who approved it.

“Let’s destroy the environment to save the environment. That seems to be the mentality,” said Deric English, who teaches at Boron Junior-Senior High School. “It’s hard to comprehend.”

English was part of a group that found the fungus that causes valley fever in samples of soil from the five parcels surrounding the two towns where the solar panels will be built.

“How are kids going to be able to play outside?” asked Melanie Richardson, a nurse who has sons at schools near the site. “So many people from our community were begging them not to approve this project, and they passed it regardless.”

The controversy over the [See **Joshua trees**, A10]

## ANALYSIS

# Mexico breaks a glass ceiling first

It’s no accident that the country managed to elect a woman as president before the U.S. and many others.

By KATE LINTHICUM AND PATRICK J. McDONNELL

MEXICO CITY — Mexico has elected its first female president — a U.S.-educated climate scientist and former mayor whose landslide victory Sunday reflects both the continued dominance of the country’s ruling party and the vast strides made by women in politics here.

That Mexico will have a female leader before the United States and the majority of other countries is no accident.

For years, Mexico has required political parties to ensure that female candidates make up at least 50% of all competitors in federal, state and municipal elections.

It has transformed politics: More than half of the members of Congress and nearly a third of governors are women, and women head the Supreme Court and the ministries of the interior, education, economy, public security and foreign relations.

Political scientists say female leaders have helped push some of Mexico’s most progressive policies, including a federal law that gives domestic workers the right to social security and the decriminalization of abortion by several states before the Supreme Court ruled last year that it should be allowed nationwide.

The election of Claudia Sheinbaum shatters the last glass ceiling in politics in a country where women were barred from voting until 1954, and where a culture of sexism and high rates of violence against women still [See **Mexico**, A4]

# Skydance Media nearing deal for Paramount



EVAN AGOSTINI Invision/AP  
**DAVID ELLISON’S** Skydance offer would keep Paramount intact.

Despite a sweetened offer, storied firm’s key shareholder has yet to approve, sources say.

By MEG JAMES

David Ellison’s Skydance Media is close to clearing a major hurdle in its pursuit of Paramount Global.

The media giant’s committee of independent board members has signaled its approval for Ellison’s take-

over of the storied company, according to four people familiar with the situation who were not authorized to comment.

Formal approval by Paramount’s special committee could come this week, one of the knowledgeable people said.

However, the Skydance deal is not entirely stitched up. It lacks the consent of Paramount’s controlling shareholder, Shari Redstone, sources said. Her support is key for any deal to move forward.

Representatives for Paramount were not immediately available to comment.

Redstone’s family owns 77% of the controlling shares of Paramount Global through its holding company National Amusements Inc., giving the heirs of Sumner Redstone enormous sway over the future of the struggling owner of Paramount Pictures, the CBS broadcast network, Comedy Central, MTV and Nickelodeon.

Complicating matters, as the Skydance sale process

has dragged on, Redstone has fielded interest from at least two other interested buyers for National Amusements.

Last week, Redstone was said to be mulling those offers, including one that was said to be higher than what Skydance and its partners had offered the Redstones. The Skydance proposal would give the Redstone family more than \$2 billion for National Amusements, including money to pay off its debts, [See **Paramount**, A7]



FERNANDO LLANO AP  
**“I DID NOT** arrive alone,” said President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum in her acceptance speech.

# Researching pet-to-person bird flu risk

The danger so far is low, but opportunities for infection are abundant

By SUSANNE RUST

When researchers talk about their biggest bird flu fears, one that typically comes up involves an animal — like a pig — becoming simultaneously infected with an avian and a human flu. This creature, now a viral mixing vessel, provides the

medium for a superbug to develop — one that takes the killer genes from the bird flu and combines it with the human variety’s knack for easy infection.

So far, domestic poultry and dairy cows have proved to be imperfect vessels. So too have the more than 48 other mammal species that have become infected by eat-

ing diseased birds and then died.

But researchers say there is one population of animal floating under the radar: pets. The risk may be low, but the opportunities for transmission are abundant.

“I think companion animals definitely need to be in the picture,” said Jane Sykes, professor of medicine

and epidemiology at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, describing the viewpoint that diseases such as H5N1 should be viewed from a human, animal and ecosystem lens. None operates in isolation.

She pointed to our furry friends’ penchant for eating dead things, other animals’ [See **Flu**, A7]

**Heat dome to affect much of state**  
Triple-digit temperatures will broil many parts of California starting Tuesday. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Dodgers winning, but doubts persist**  
Pitching and bottom of the order remain unsettled, Dylan Hernández writes. **SPORTS, B10**

**Weather**  
Partly sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 78/61. **B6**

**Rubio’s shutters 48 restaurants**  
The chain confirms closures in California, citing business costs in the state. **BUSINESS, A6**

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