



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**THE VINCENT THOMAS** Bridge, a vital artery in the L.A.-Long Beach port complex, must be fixed before it falls into further disrepair.

## Bridge closure ‘Harbor-geddon’ feared

Span to be shut down for crucial repairs. Residents brace for pollution and traffic.

BY RACHEL URANGA

Caltrans is slated to fully close the cracked and spalling 61-year-old Vincent Thomas Bridge connecting San Pedro to Terminal Is-

land as soon as next year — stirring fear of traffic nightmares for nearby neighborhoods that breathe some of the region’s most polluted air.

Once a tollway, the iconic mile-long suspension bridge — a crucial artery in the nation’s busiest port complex — has been deteriorating for years.

Tests show that the concrete deck is failing, and engineers warned it needs to be

fixed before it falls into further disrepair, forcing the state to close it altogether.

After years of studies, months of meetings and a more than 900-page environmental review, the California Department of Transportation recently announced that the bridge will shut down completely for 16 months beginning late next year or early 2026.

Traffic will be rerouted through nearby streets that

have yet to be determined.

“A lot of people are going to be inconvenienced with this closure,” said Caltrans spokesperson Eric Mejivar. “But this bridge deck replacement project needs to be done. ... The bridge deck has met its lifespan.”

Activists say the work will cause more than a traffic jam.

“They really need to consider the impact to the residents here,” said Irma Vene-

gas, 56, a lifelong resident of Wilmington. “We already look at a layer of dust on our cars [and] our homes every day because of the environmental pollution. It is going to be worse with added traffic.”

Wilmington residents have long complained about noxious air and the rumble of cargo trucks. The community of about 59,000 residents — largely Latino — sits [See Bridge, A10]

## Climate change fuels droughts in the West

Higher temperatures make dry spells much more frequent and severe, research finds.

BY IAN JAMES

Humanity’s heating of the planet, driven by the burning of fossil fuels and unchecked emissions of greenhouse gases, has become the main driver of worsening droughts in California and the American West, according to new research.

A team of UCLA and NOAA scientists found that while droughts in the last century were caused mainly by decreases in precipitation through natural cycles, an entirely different pattern has taken hold as a result of the rising temperatures this

century.

The researchers determined that since 2000, human-caused warming has become the dominant force leading to more drought severity in the Western United States. In the case of the intense Western drought from 2020 to 2022, the scientists attributed 61% of its severity to high temperatures, and only 31% to reduced precipitation.

“For the same precipitation deficit, drought now is much stronger than it used to be in the 20th century, and drought also lasts longer,” said Rong Fu, a UCLA climate researcher and study co-author. “That makes drought more severe and more extensive.”

She and her colleagues analyzed data from 1948 to the present in 11 Western states from California to [See Climate, A7]



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**A RANCHER** near Santa Paula surveys the carcass of one of his cattle that died during a drought.



JEAN CHUNG For The Times

**A STRING** of disasters and bad luck has turned South Korea’s Im Chae-moo and his theme park, Doori Land, into a cautionary tale of financial ruin.

**COLUMN ONE**

## South Korean heartthrob settles into his second act

Im Chae-moo found fame and fortune in the 1980s as a TV star. He spent it all on a theme park for children.

BY MAX KIM

REPORTING FROM YANGJU, SOUTH KOREA

In the late 1970s, before he became a television star and a household name in South Korea, Im Chae-moo was working as an extra when he had an epiphany.

During one production, shot near a creek where families picnicked, he watched the same depressing scene play out day after day: The adults would drink, gamble, fight and fling empty soju bottles, while the children would catch

minnows in the water, occasionally cutting their feet on the broken glass.

“That was when it just came to me,” Im recalled. “I told myself I’d become a successful actor and become rich so that I could create a place where families can come and enjoy themselves together.”

His breakout role in a popular soap opera titled “Love and Truth” in 1984 led to a heady career as a national heartthrob. At a time when an apartment in Seoul would sell for just a few thousand dollars, Im was making nearly \$100,000 a month.

[See South Korea, A4]

## Plan to deport millions involves military

Trump also confirms he’s ready to declare a national emergency over immigrants.

BY ANDREA CASTILLO

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump’s plan to execute mass deportations of immigrants in the U.S. illegally will involve the military and a national emergency declaration, he confirmed Monday.

In a Nov. 8 post on Trump’s social media platform Truth Social, Tom Fitton, who leads the conservative legal group Judicial Watch, wrote: “GOOD NEWS: Reports are the incoming @realDonaldTrump administration prepared to declare a national emergency and will use military assets to reverse the Biden invasion through a mass deportation program.”

Trump responded early Monday: “TRUE!!!”

Asked for more details of the plan, Trump transition spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said in a statement that “President Trump will marshal every federal and state power necessary to institute the largest deportation operation of illegal criminals, drug dealers, and human traffickers in American history.”

Advocates for immigrants, including the American Civil Liberties Union, have said they are prepared to respond with legal action.

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow at the left-leaning American Immigration Council, cautioned that there is no national emergency authority permitting the U.S. to carry out deportations.

During his first term, [See Deportations, A10]

### Foreign students flock to state

Led by India, international enrollment at U.S. universities climbs to an all-time high. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Spirit Airlines seeks Chapter 11

Budget carrier says all tickets, credits and loyalty points remain valid as it attempts to reboot. **BUSINESS, A6**

### Chargers finally finishing strong

They pull out a win in a close game to shed late-loser label and carry new confidence. **SPORTS, B10**

### Weather

Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 70/48. **B6**

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