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PETAL PUSHERS



Performers with the Wells Fargo theme float "Just Imagine..." move along Orange Grove Boulevard during the 123rd Tournament of Roses Parade on Monday in Pasadena. Occupy protesters also participated in the event. **Read the story on A4.** RINGO H.W. CHIU/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GROWING THE ECONOMY

Manufacturer drawn to desert

Designer to begin producing line of clothing in valley

By Debra Gruszecki
The Desert Sun

THOUSAND PALMS — When West Hollywood entrepreneur Li-ta Tala began producing her Kentucky Denim line of men's clothing in China three years ago, it all made perfect sense.

Labor costs in Guangzhou were low. Shipping one container loaded with 20,000 to 30,000 garments out of China every three to four weeks to distribute to more than 300 boutique stores in the United States, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom penciled out.

That's no longer the case today, so Tala is bringing the work to California.

And she's picked a warehouse in the Coachella Valley Enterprise Zone to sew the "Made in America" label into a new line of

Kentucky Denim sets up shop

Kentucky Denim will begin its knitwear-manufacturing operation in its new warehouse in Thousand Palms today. The company is creating 30 jobs to begin a new line of clothing here.



knitwear.

Today, Tala Enterprise opens officially with a workforce of 31, a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a vision to:

- Expand its workforce to 400 by the fifth year of operation.
- Revive the Kentucky Denim line within two years.
- Inspire other garment-makers from the Los Angeles area and other parts of the country to move here.
- Create a fashion district that

will act as a launching pad for budding artists, designers, models, trade shows and entrepreneurs.

Tala, who has already opened a store in Blythe, also plans to open retail ventures in Coachella, Indio and La Quinta within the year to sell her wares and the labels of others from L.A.'s Fashion District.

"The ball's started rolling, and, so far, it has not stopped," Tala said. "Instead of importing from China, I hope to export my products to China."

Manufacturing businesses like Tala's will likely continue moving back to the United States from China and other parts of Asia, experts say.

"The manufacturing sector is seeing a bit of a revival for a couple of reasons," said John Husing, a longtime economist who gives an annual report on the Coachella Valley economy every fall.

"The Asian economies have dropped, so anything we buy in this country that's made overseas will tend to be more expensive because the value of the dollar has dropped," Husing said.

Besides the wage differential, oil prices have held at the \$100 per barrel mark. That's made shipping

Please see DENIM, A2

2012 ELECTION

Moment of truth: Iowans to have their say today

Republican candidates barnstorm state on eve of nation's first caucuses

By David Espo and Mike Glover
The Associated Press

DES MOINES, IOWA — The White House their goal, Republican presidential hopefuls raced across Iowa on Monday in a final, full day of frenzied appeals for support in precinct caucuses that open the 2012 campaign.

"It is the race you make it," an upset-minded Rick Santorum told voters soon to pick a winner.

In the race's final hours, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney predicted victory, and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich all but forecast his own defeat.

From Sioux City in the western part of the state to Davenport in the east, six presidential hope-

fuls — former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman is not campaigning in Iowa — hustled through 23 fast-paced campaign events combined. That and the \$13 million or more already spent on television commercials was evidence enough of the outsized importance Iowa holds in the race to pick a Republican opponent for President Barack Obama next fall.

Romney had one eye on his GOP rivals and another on Obama as he argued he is in the best position of all to capture the White House. The president has been "a great divider, the great complainer, the great excuse-giver, the great blamer," said the former Massachusetts governor, who is making his second try for the nomination and has been at or

Please see IOWA, A5



Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney campaigns for the Republican presidential nomination at the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds on Monday in Davenport, Iowa. CHARLES DHARAPAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Boxer maintains role as champion of EPA

By Paul C. Barton
Desert Sun Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — In a year when controversy has surrounded the Environmental Protection Agency like never before, it has had no bigger defender in Congress than Sen. Barbara Boxer.

Pro-business groups and many Republicans criticize the EPA as an

out-of-control bureaucracy that inhibits job creation through excessive regulations on businesses and farms, achieving minimal environmental gain at excessive cost.

Especially controversial have been proposals directed at power

plants and other industrial facilities to limit greenhouse gases, coal ash, mercury and other toxic substances.

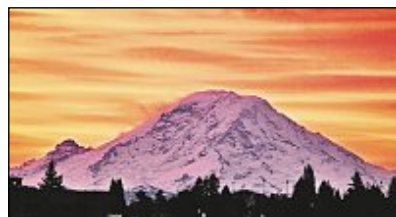
Even cement plants have drawn the EPA's scrutiny, as have hospitals, universities and farmers who don't adequately control their dust.

The Wall Street Journal has accused the EPA of "turning a regulatory fire hose" on employers.

In response, environmental groups such as the League of Conservation Voters have labeled this Congress, especially the House of Representatives, as one of the most "anti-environmental" in history.

Even the controversy over payroll tax cuts turned into a squabble over environmental policy as

Please see BOXER, A2



Police: Body of gunman found in park

The body of an armed Iraq War veteran suspected of killing a Mount Rainier National Park ranger was discovered Monday lying partially submerged in an icy, snowy mountain creek. The finding of Benjamin Colton Barnes ended a 24-hour manhunt for the killer of ranger Margaret Anderson. **A3**

GOOD MORNING

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Advice	B11	Lottery	B6
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INSIDE TODAY'S PAPER

CALM RESTORED

A Palm Springs neighborhood has reached amity after a meeting with a nearby school's officials. **B1**

FAMED FAREWELLS

The Coachella Valley said goodbye to some much-loved entertainers in 2011. **B8**



ESTATE PLANNING

The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands and adjacent Sunnylands Center in Rancho Mirage prepares for its black-tie gala introduction next month. **B1**

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DENIM

Continued from A1

more expensive, in some cases erasing the advantage offered by lower Chinese wages.

"What we've seen at the ports of L.A. and Long Beach in the latter half of the year is a reduction in imported goods, and an expansion of exported goods," Husing said.

Imports, through November, are essentially flat after starting off the year with a 13-percent year-over-year gain, Husing said. Exports are up 6.8 percent in November from the same month in 2010, with 3.3 million containers shipped out of these ports.

"This is an all-time high," Husing said.

Quality control also has been an issue in China, said Tala, who's also been the victim of container theft.

The Boston Consulting Group, a global management consulting firm with offices in 42 countries, issued a mid-year report that predicted the United States can expect to see a manufacturing resurgence over the next five years.

Chinese wages have risen about 17 percent annually, the BCG report said. With the value of the yuan on the rise, the wage gap between China and the United States is shrinking.

Since wages can represent up to 30 percent of a product's total cost, China-based manufacturing will be only 10-15 percent cheaper than in the U.S., even before inventory and shipping costs are factored into the equation.

"Executives who are planning a new factory in China to make exports for sale in the U.S. should take a hard look at the total costs," Harold Sirkin, a senior partner with the firm, said upon the report's May release.

Firm helps diversify valley's economy

With the Coachella Valley's unemployment rates still at their highest levels since spring 2009, the jobs that such manufacturing businesses can provide are



This structure at 72-182 Corporate Way in Thousand Palms, inside the Coachella Valley Enterprise Zone, is the new home of the Tala Enterprise warehouse, with a workforce of 31. RICHARD LUI/THE DESERT SUN

WHAT'S AN ENTERPRISE ZONE?

There are 42 designated zones in the state. Administered by the state Department of Housing and Community Development, the Enterprise Zone program provides tax incentives to businesses in distressed areas to attract, expand and retain businesses and create jobs. The Coachella Valley Enterprise Zone includes the areas of Thousand Palms, Indio, Coachella and Mecca.

more than welcome.

Tala's opening is a great way to kick off the new year here, said Rep. Mary Bono Mack, who serves as chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade.

"We need her kind of passion and entrepreneurial spirit if we're going to turn around our sluggish economy," the Palm Springs Republican said. "This is an exciting new venture for our area, and I wish Liat great success moving forward."

The recession created a reality check for everyone, Tala said.

"I reached a point where I want to do something to help our country," she said. "I weighed the decision of what was important to my company against an unemployment rate that was 14 percent" in the valley and, from there, the decision was easy.

Startup costs for the operation are north of \$300,000, said Paula Turner, a co-own-

er and broker of Desert Pacific Properties.

Tala Enterprise is using a 26,000-square-foot building that once housed an electrical supply business, Turner said.

"At a time when businesses are moving out of California, we're actually taking a business from China and putting them in the Coachella Valley," Turner said.

CVEP, business zones were instrumental

Mark Weber, manager of the Coachella Valley Enterprise Zone, said a team has worked with Tala Enterprise since July, the moment she made her first contact.

Working with the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, Tala was put in contact with the county, state Employment Development Department, and several U.S. departments to pull out the stops to convince Tala's manufacturing venture to move here.

Tala also was offered of-

fice space at the Rabobank Regional Business Center in Palm Springs, the headquarters of CVEP and the valley's Innovation Hub.

When it was too late to head back to her Los Angeles home, she was given lodging.

"Our whole mission was to show how business-friendly we can be," said Wesley Ahlgren, CVEP operations director.

"I decided that this valley has a lot of promising features," Tala said, citing the hiring tax credits, job training assistance, solid workforce, affordable housing and easy access to Los Angeles and its shipping ports.

"The numbers had to make sense, but she also had to feel comfortable with us," Weber said. "It signals better times for California in manufacturing."

Thomas Flavin, chief executive of CVEP, noted that Tala's arrival follows CareFusion Corp.'s recent announcement that it will not move to Minnesota but will keep its ventilator production facility in Palm Springs.

"We've finished the year with a success, and we're starting it with a success."

Debra Gruszecki can be reached at Debra.Gruszecki@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4643.

BOXER

Continued from A1

House Republicans tried to attach measures to block the EPA's efforts in many areas.

The main protector of the initiatives of the embattled agency and its director — Lisa Jackson — has been the 71-year-old Boxer, a Democrat who leads the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

According to the League of Conservation Voters, the House has held more than 190 votes this year on measures that environmental groups decry. That's almost as many votes as the Democratically controlled Senate has held on all issues combined.

Boxer, who has a home in Rancho Mirage, calls attention constantly to Republican environmental propos-

"Put simply, if you can't breathe, you can't work, and if anyone in Congress tries to move toward dirty air policies, I will take it to the American people and do everything in my power to stop them."

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

als coming over from the House and works with Senate Democratic leaders to weed them before the bills go farther.

"Clearly, she has been outspoken and strong on every environmental issue. We wish we had 99 more just like her," said Scott Slesinger, legislative director for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

But the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has a different view, giving Boxer a lifetime score of 30 percent on issues important to businesses, the fifth-lowest number assigned to any member of the Senate in its latest rankings.

As the U.S. economy limps along, EPA regulators need to be bridled, not enabled, business groups say.

"As manufacturers try to recover from one of the worst recessions of our nation's history, it is imperative that the EPA slow down and review the regulations that it has in place and those that are not yet finalized to ensure predictability within the regulatory realm," the National Association of Manufacturers said in a statement.

Boxer responds that job creation and environmental protection should not be considered mutually exclusive.

"The evidence is mounting all around us that climate change has already caused damage to our environment," Boxer said.

"The trend is clear, and scientists around the world are concerned about what is happening to our planet."

But politicians are still debating whether the changing climate is a natural or manmade phenomenon. Boxer's positions on climate-change legislation have garnered criticism from some in her own party.

Sen. Max Baucus, a key Democratic moderate from Montana, said of her 2009 bill to cap carbon emissions: "We cannot afford the unmitigated impacts of climate change, but we also cannot afford the unmitigated effects of legislation."

Patrick J. Michaels, head of climate change studies at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, is one of those who contend a "sky is falling" attitude on climate change is unjustified.

The "sensitivity" of temperature change to carbon emissions is not nearly as severe as many in the global warming community, contend, he said.

"That doesn't mean there is no global warming," Michaels said. But it is happening at far, far slower a pace than those such as Boxer contend, he added.

"It would be foolish to undertake a drastic program to reduce carbon dioxide," he said, adding it would also prove politically unpopular as the public realized the cost.

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