Business

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DOW 11,822.80

S&P 500 1,280.26

NASDAQ 2,704.29

AMEX 2,134.80

NYSE 8,076.72

Granite cracks the nut that is solar power

Indio construction company makes ground-breaking steps to power plant

BY K KAUFMANN

Granite Construction Co. in Indio is raising the bar on solar power in the Coachella Valley with a cutting-edge installation that will power the company's asphalt plant and provide extra electricity to the Imperial Irrigation

The company announced the project, which uses super-efficient concentrated photovoltaic technology, at the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership's Renewable Energy Roundtable on Thursday at the University of California, Riverside's Palm Desert

"This particular technology, for our particularly larger sites, you can produce more energy on the land," said Lee Haven, business development manager for Granite. "There's less disturbance on the land."

The installation is in progress at Granite's Indio location on Monroe Street and should go online in March,

The system is manufactured by Amonix of Seal Beach. The compasame as those used in aircraft windshields, that can concentrate sunlight at 500 times its usual intensity, allowing the panels to produce more energy on less land.

The Granite project will consist of six pedestals about 50 feet high, mounted with panels about 47 feet tall by 70 feet wide that track the sun, changing position throughout the day to harvest the most light possi-

It will produce about 800,000 kilowatt hours a year — enough electricity to power more than 100 homes, Haven said.

While Haven declined to discuss the cost, he said Granite could get about \$782,000 in rebates from IID over the ny's panels use acrylic materials, the next five years, and the payback pe-



Granite Construction in Indio put up a 50-foot-tall pedestal, part of a cutting-edge solar installation now going up at the company's site on Monroe Street

Employees at

and half years.

And "it will help reduce the cost of producing asphalt."

Sabrina Barber, IID assistant energy manager, said, "For us, it offsets (power) load during peak demand that

riod on the project will be about six would otherwise be serviced by the utility."

> Wesley Ahlgren of CVEP said the project also provides more diversity to the valley's growing renewable energy project portfolio. "It's cutting edge; it puts us on the map," he said.

Economic

indicators

moving up

WASHINGTON — The econo-

my's expansion is expected to con-

tinue, though there are "some strong

headwinds" in the medium term, the

Conference Board said Thursday as

it reported that its leading economic

index rose 1 percent in December.

"Overall, economic activity is likely to continue to gain momentum

in 2011," said Ken Goldstein,

economist at the Conference Board,

Six of the 10 indicators included in

the index made positive contri-

butions in December: building per-

mits; the interest-rate spread; av-

erage weekly initial claims for un-

employment-insurance benefits;

stock prices; the index of consumer

expectations; and manufacturers'

new orders for nondefense capital

Two indicators offered negative

contributions: the index of supplier

deliveries and manufacturers' new

orders for consumer goods and

slowly

BY RUTH MANTELL

MarketWatch

in a statement.

goods.

Hollywood banking on 3-D

Nintendo: Kids 6 and under should not play with 3-D home gaming systems

BY PETER SVENSSON

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK — From Hollywood studios to Japanese TV makers, powerful business interests are betting 3-D will be the future of entertainment, despite a major drawback: It makes millions of people uncomfortable or sick.

Optometrists say as many as one in four viewers have problems watching 3-D movies and TV, either because 3-D causes tiresome eyestrain or because the viewer has problems perceiving depth in real life. In the worst cases, 3-D makes people queasy, leaves them dizzy or gives them

Researchers have begun developing more lifelike 3-D displays that might address the problems, but they're years or even decades from being available

That isn't deterring the entertainment industry, which is aware of the problem yet charging ahead with plans to create more movies and TV shows in 3-D. Jeff Katzenberg, CEO of Dreamworks Animation SKG Inc., calls 3-D "the greatest innovation that's happened for the movie theaters and for moviegoers since color."

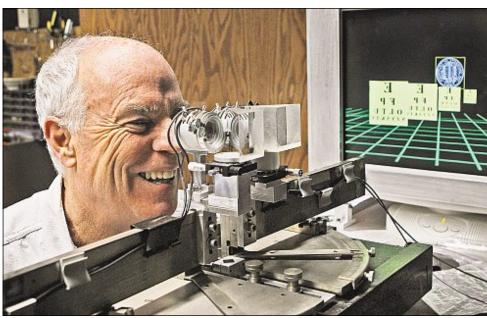
Theater owners including AMC Entertainment Inc. and TV makers such as Panasonic Corp. are spending more than a billion dollars to upgrade theaters and TVs for 3-D. A handful of satellite and cable channels are already carrying 3-D programming; ESPN just announced its 3-D network will begin broadcasting 24 hours a day next month.

Yet there are already signs that consumers may not be as excited about 3-D as the entertainment and electronics industries are.

Last year, people were willing to pay an additional \$3 or more per ticket for blockbuster 3-D movies such as "Avatar" and "Toy Story 3." But that didn't help the overall box office take: People spent \$10.6 billion on movie tickets last year, down slightly from the year before. People went to the theater less, but spent more.

3-DTV sets were available in the U.S. for the first time last year, but shipments came in below forecasts, at just under 1.6 million for North America, according to DisplaySearch.

Nevertheless, TV makers such as Samsung Elec-



BEN MARGOT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

University of California, Berkeley Professor Marty Banks looks through a birefringent lens display at the university. Powerful business interests are betting that 3-D will be the big new thing in entertainment, despite an important obstacle: though improved over yesteryear's 3-D, today's technology still gives many people headaches.

"The greatest innovation that's happened for the movie theaters and for moviegoers since color.

JEFF KATZENBERG, CEO OF DREAMWORKS

3-D and introduced more 3-D-capable models this month at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Those models cost more than regular ones and require glasses, just like in theaters.

Research into how today's 3-D screens affect viewers is only in its early stages. There have been no large-scale scientific studies.

A study of 115 South Koreans watching 3-D screens close up found that 3-D caused more eyestrain than 2-D. The research prompted the Korean government to recommend that viewers take tronics Co. and Panasonic are doubling down on a break of up to 15 minutes after an hour of 3-D

viewing. But that study was based on glasses with red and green lenses rather than the ones used in theaters and with TVs.

Based on an unscientific, online survey, the American Optometric Association estimates that 25 percent of Americans have experienced headaches, blurred vision, nausea or similar problems when viewing 3-D.

TV makers do their own testing, but don't publish results. Samsung warns on its Australian website that its 3-D TVs can cause "motion sickness, perceptual after effects, disorientation, eye strain,

Please see 3-D, A19

materials. A pair of other indicators average weekly manufacturing hours and the real money supply held steady.

"Overall, economic

activity is likely to continue to gain momentum in 2011."

KEN GOLDSTEIN

economist at the Conference Board

"While this was better than the consensus forecast of a 0.6 percent gain, most of the positive surprise was attributable to a jump in building permits during the month," said Aichi Amemiya, an economist at Nomura. "Stripping out a 0.41 percentage points contribution from building permits (which likely were boosted temporarily by regulatory changes in some regions), today's reading would be essentially in line with expectations."

In November, the index gained 1.1 percent.

The indicators have shown widespread strength in recent months, according to the Conference Board. For the six months through December, the index gained 3.3 percent, up from 2.4 percent in the prior six months.

The leading economic index is a weighted gauge of 10 indicators that are designed to signal business-cycle peaks and troughs.

Leading indicators

112

110

Economic activity index: 2004=100

Percent

+1.0%

Small Business Snapshot

businesses in the Coachella Valley. If you'd like to nominate a business, please e-mail John Hussar at BizSnaps@gmail.com or call (760) 567-8073.

through this route, they are out there and they

of mentors and my family."

- JOHN HUSSAR

COMING SUNDAY

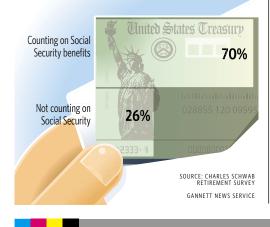
Mr. La Rue and golf too, plus **future of Enterprising Zones**

The Desert Sun's Business Plus section in Sunday's paper will take a closer look at:

- Rich La Rue, a longtime real estate agent who leads Intero Real Estate Services Desert Cities in Palm Desert and Palm Springs and has sights on expansion.
- Enterprise Zones, which have benefited the eastern Coachella Valley, but are now on Gov. Jerry Brown's state budget chopping block.
- The Indian Canyons Golf Resort, which celebrates its 50th anniversary and looks back its star-studded history.

Read more about these stories in Sunday's **Business Plus section.**

As a retirement income source, I am ...



SMALL BUSINESS SNAPSHOT

On the outside, it's looking up

Business name: PB Patio — Pebble Beach Outdoor

Address: 71-572 Highway 111, Rancho Mirage. Days and hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily

Owner: Ata Yazici

Date founded: November 2008

Description of business: Outdoor and patio furniture, patio decorations, pottery, and custom outdoor cushion upholstery.

Number of employees: 4 Projected revenues: \$480,000

Cost of startup: \$150,000

Source of startup financing: Private investors. Did you write a business plan? "Yes I did. First, writing a well-thought-out and organized business plan dramatically increases your odds of succeeding

as an entrepreneur. "Predicting and planning your business finances can also show potential investors that

your business idea will fly. "Preparing financial forecasts is a good idea

even if you don't need to raise startup money." Marketing budget: \$25,000 Recipe for success: "It may be a cliché by now, but

a clear goal is a good start. You need to know where you are headed for sure in order to make it a successful journey. "Secondly, go for it and commit to give the

best effort to preserve the quality of this journey; desire helps a lot at this point. "Make sure to be alert and see what is

working, what is not, and do not lose time to take care of it. "Take advantage of the people who have been



The Desert Sun is taking snapshots of small

are an asset to you.

Personal motto or mantra: "Treat everyone as you would expect to be treated."

Where do you seek advice? "Within trusted circle

Information: (760) 341-4236; www.pbpatio.com

DJFMAMJJASOND '09 '10 Note: All figures are seasonally adjusted THE ASSOCIATED PRESS SOURCE: THE CONFERENCE BOARD