



ERNESTO BENAVIDES AFP/Getty Images

ANCHOVIES caught off the coast of Peru’s Lima province. Peru is a leading producer of fishmeal and fish oil.

Hidden cost of farmed fish takes global toll

Feed behind modern aquaculture drives ocean depletion, labor abuses and unrest.

By IAN URBINA

As of 2022, more than half of the seafood eaten worldwide was farm-raised rather than caught at sea, a fact that has been praised as evidence that fish farming can meet a growing demand for seafood while slowing the collapse of the oceans.

But the unbridled embrace of aquaculture as a sustainable answer to feeding the planet ignores some very real costs.

The most popular types of farmed seafood — salmon, shrimp, trout, seabass, seabream — are fed “fishmeal,” a protein-rich powder or pellet made from the kinds of wild fish that aquaculture is thought to save.

In fact, fishmeal is fed to two-thirds of global farmed fish. Before they reach market, some farm-raised salmon eat more than six times their weight in wild-caught fish.

With thousands of fish farms worldwide, aquaculture provides millions of people with year-round access to affordable protein. Fish farming is also a crucial source of jobs, especially for women in India.

But a wide-reaching investigation by the Outlaw Ocean Project, a nonprofit news organization based in Washington, D.C., has found that the aquaculture industry’s answer to worries about the world’s oceans — “grow more fish so we can catch less” — is often making the very problem it hoped to solve worse and harming the people it was meant to help.

The business of fishmeal — often out of public view — can involve using forced labor, poisoning communities, and eradicating the livelihoods of local fishermen.

Fishmeal production has led to chronic chemical exposure, violent protests — typically spurred by the stench from fishmeal factories — and escalating transnational tensions as countries compete for catch. That price is paid primarily by the poorer countries where the main ingredient of fishmeal is harvested and processed.

The Outlaw Ocean Project mapped roughly the entire global fishmeal industry, including more than 1,400 fishmeal factories across 64 countries. The effort involved dozens of journalists [See **Fish**, A6]

A rocky road ahead for Ellison and Skydance

Hollywood’s failed mergers serve as a reminder

By MEG JAMES

Tech scion David Ellison spent three years doggedly pursuing his dream: acquiring Paramount, then Warner Bros. Discovery.

Ellison pulled off his bold feat last week by completing Paramount’s \$13-billion takeover of Warner Bros., uniting two industry pioneers and a wealth of cherished properties — Batman, Bugs Bunny, Harry Potter and Maverick of “Top Gun,” as well as CBS, HBO, Comedy Central and CNN. All will be tucked under a corporate umbrella that Ellison is calling Skydance — the name of the studio he formed two decades ago.

The mogul and his lieutenants celebrated their victory in style, ringing the New York Stock Exchange opening bell

on Thursday, capping a bruising battle to secure approval of a deal that had sparked protests across Hollywood over fears of looming job cuts.

Ellison and his team must braid together two huge film studios (housing nine film labels), four streaming services, three TV production studios, three animation units and more than 50 television networks, including two prominent news organizations. That could be a daunting task, particularly based on how previous Hollywood mergers have fared.

“Now, the real work begins,” David G. Fubini, a Harvard Business School senior lecturer, said in an interview.

Anxieties were evident Tuesday — the [See **Mergers**, A13]

Stylish rides in stolen U.S. rental cars

Mexican cartels increasingly spiriting high-end vehicles across border

By STEVE FISHER

MEXICO CITY — Mexican cartels are stealing cars and trucks from U.S. rental agencies at an alarming rate, spiriting thousands of vehicles across the border each year to keep top capos in the latest model BMWs and Cadillacs.

Law enforcement agencies and companies charged with trying to recover stolen vehicles say that while much of the theft occurs in border states, cartel operatives have stolen vehicles from as far away as New York, Chi-



CARLIN STIEHL For The Times

LUXURY rental cars at Los Angeles International Airport. California is the top target for rental thefts.

All eyes are on swing voters in race for Senate

With upper house up for grabs, candidates train efforts on large pool of independents.

By JUSTINE MCDANIEL

WASHINGTON — With the midterm elections just over three weeks away, the fight for control of the U.S. Senate is intensifying in battleground states, as Democrats push into red regions and Republicans pour money into key contests.

Campaigns are entering a crucial stretch for persuading the independent voters who will probably determine outcomes in swing races. Nearly all of the most competitive Senate races are in states with significant swaths of people unaffiliated with either major party — the “kingmakers” in these high-stakes midterms, said Jeremy Gruber, an independent-voting expert.

“Independent voters are going to be deciding this election in every respect,” said Gruber, senior vice president of Open Primaries, an organization that advocates for states to open primary elections to unaffiliated voters.

The urgency around courting nonaligned voters has been on display at recent debates, in ads flooding the airwaves and in the campaign money pouring into key states. For Republicans, it has become an effort to put distance between themselves and President Trump; for Democrats, it’s often a rhetorical shift toward the center and away from the far left.

In Iowa, Republican Ashley Hinson used a Wednesday night debate to emphasize her willingness to break with Trump. In Kansas, Democrat Adam Hamilton is circulating a video in which he describes himself as both liberal and conservative. In Alaska, a GOP-backed ad blitz launched last week aims to persuade voters that Democrat Mary Peltola isn’t independent-minded.

Though many unaffiliated voters have made up their minds, those who remain undecided will begin making decisions soon, as [See **Senate**, A10]

Trans issues return to election spotlight

GOP pushes message that rights should be dismantled, while Democrats are split.

By KEVIN RECTOR

At the Republican Party’s midterm convention, President Trump said he would make his crusade against transgender rights a major campaign issue ahead of the Nov. 3 election — calling the message that “men should not be playing in women’s sports” one of his party’s “great sound bites of all time.”

During a recent campaign trip, Gov. Gavin Newsom, a longtime LGBTQ+ advocate and likely Democratic contender for president in 2028, stood by his remark last year that allowing transgender athletes to compete in girls’ sports is “deeply unfair,” saying, “I haven’t been able to figure out how to make it fair from my perspective.”

For the second election cycle in a row, the rights of transgender people have taken center stage politically, despite their accounting for only about 1% of the U.S. population and many voters identifying other issues as far more important — splitting Republicans and Democrats, but also Democrats among themselves and putting the party on the defensive.

The politics are part of a much broader, international battle playing out in education, sports and the law, from local California classrooms and high school sports to the Olympic stage and the U.S. Supreme Court. Polling for years has shown most Americans oppose discrimination against transgender people, but also that a majority — including a substantial portion of Democrats — oppose transgender athletes participating in girls’ sports and children receiving gender-affirming care such as surgery or puberty blockers.

Republicans are pushing a well-funded message that transgender rights should be dismantled across the board, in healthcare, education, sports, the military and public spaces such as restrooms. Conservative megadonors such as Elon Musk have spent millions amplifying that message in competitive races from Alaska to Ohio to Texas.

And to some degree, those tactics have worked. [See **Trans**, A10]

Voices STEVE LOPEZ COLUMNIST

How four Angelenos escaped homelessness

The way back can follow many different paths, none of them easy



ERIC THAYER Los Angeles Times

MICHAEL MATA, a supervisor with Chrysalis’ road cleanup program, works at the office last week.

About two years ago, Michael Mata boarded a bus at 5 a.m. near the shelter where he was living, on the northern edge of South Los Angeles. He was determined to bring an end to years of sporadic homelessness and a string of dead-end jobs.

A shelter mate had advised him to arrive early at Chrysalis, a nonprofit that helps people figure out how to find work and rebuild their lives. A line forms early, Mata had been told, and they can only take in so many people each day.

“I got here at 5:30,” said Mata, who was first in line.

That day, Mata took two of the four required orientation classes. Two days later, he took the other two. When I met him Wednesday, Mata was driving a van into the parking lot at Chrysalis headquarters. He’s a road crew supervisor, with six people under him. They [See **Lopez**, A16]

Major attack on Saudi airport

Strike kills 12, injures 300 in escalation of key front in Iran war. U.S. may respond, Trump says. **WORLD, A8**

Tropical storm’s threats to SoCal

Rachel could gain strength and bring potential hazards that include coastal flooding. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

UCLA holds on for big victory

Bruins remain undefeated and end a five-game losing streak against Oregon with a 17-15 win. **SPORTS, D1**

Weather
Some rain.
L.A. Basin: 72/60. **B7**

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