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COLUMN ONE

Two Camps in Big Sur

■ An aging, dwindling population and strict development rules hurt the area, some say. For others, it's a matter of preserving the land.

By JOHN JOHNSON
Times Staff Writer

BIG SUR, Calif. — For years, the phrase "Save Big Sur" meant preservation of the timeless forests and streams perched high above the Central California coast.

Now it means the people. "A lot of people bemoan the loss of community," said Kirk Gafill, co-owner of the famed Nepenthe restaurant on Highway 1. "That's code for fear of the future of Big Sur."

Beset by sky-high real estate prices, rich absentee landowners, restrictions on development and a shrinking, aging population, many residents fear their community is losing its vitality. With the median price of homes in the region nearly tripling in five years to \$1.65 million (one hillside home of 1,200 square feet is on the market for \$7 million), and the average age of a Big Surite now above 45 years, longtime inhabitants say they are having trouble finding people to man the hoses at the fire brigade or head committees at Captain Cooper Elementary School. School enrollment — just 74 students — was so low this fall that the school narrowly averted closure.

According to Census Bureau statistics, Big Sur's population, at just over 800 people and falling, is lower than it was in the 1880s, when there was no highway and the only jobs available consisted of scraping for gold and knocking down trees.

Today, much of the private property has been put off limits to development. According to Monterey County figures, 84% of the 255,000 acres included in what is called the Big Sur Planning Area is restricted. Just 45,000 acres along the coast remain in private hands, and some [See Big Sur, Page A14]

Pleaded for Dying Man, Inmates Say

They told state senator they alerted Corcoran staff to grave condition of starving prisoner.

By MARK ARAX
Times Staff Writer

FRESNO — For two months, guards and medical staff at a state prison in Corcoran failed to provide meals or emergency care to an elderly inmate dying of malnutrition, according to inmate accounts given to a state senator.

In the days before 72-year-old Khem Singh starved to death at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility last month, fellow inmates said, they alerted correctional officers to his grave condition and filed official complaints about his mistreatment.

But no medical help was provided, even as it became clear to inmates that Singh, a Sikh priest from India who spoke no English and was crippled, had become emaciated and was intent on killing himself.

One inmate wrote a letter to state Sen. Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles) pleading that she intervene, but it arrived a few days after Singh's death Feb. 16. The inmate alleged that a guard had brutalized Singh in early December, and that Singh was so afraid of a second assault that he hadn't left his cell for meals or medical appointments for nearly 60 days. [See Corcoran, Page A8]

Spanish Voters Oust Ruling Party



SEA OF CHANGE: Spaniards outside the Socialist Party's headquarters in Madrid hold a banner marked with the symbol of a black ribbon of mourning, in memory of last week's train bombing victims. Turnout was unexpectedly high, as were emotions.

Anger over support for the war in Iraq, and the terrorist attacks at home, are evident in the election that puts the Socialists in charge.

By TRACY WILKINSON
Times Staff Writer

MADRID — Blaming last week's railway bombings on their government's support for the U.S. war in Iraq, Spanish voters ousted the ruling party Sunday in an angry, dramatic upset.

Barely two hours after the polls closed, the opposition Socialist Party claimed victory as Spaniards waving flags poured into Madrid's streets. The Popular Party of Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar conceded defeat, another victim of Spain's deadliest terrorist attack — one increasingly attributed to Islamic extremists.

The Socialist victory ends eight years of conservative rule and deprives Washington of one of its closest allies, complicating the Bush administration's international political and military agenda. Socialist leaders have said they will bring Spanish troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan, where they were among the earliest members of U.S.-led alliances.

"Today the Spanish people have spoken with massive participation. They have said they want a government of change," Socialist Party leader and soon-to-be Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero told a crowded room of supporters.

He opened his victory address with a minute of silence for the dead.

Reeling from Thursday's railway bombings, which killed 200 people and wounded 1,500, Spanish voters turned out in high numbers Sunday. Emotions were raw. People wept openly at polling stations, many of which were draped with black mourning ribbons.

Numerous voters said they believed Spain's support for the Bush administration had put it in the cross hairs of Islamic terrorists.

Aznar's government initially downplayed the possibility that the bombings were the work of Islamic militants and instead blamed Basque separatists.

In the middle of Saturday night, however, just hours before the polls opened, the govern- [See Spain, Page A6]

Putin Emerges Dominant After Vote

By KIM MURPHY
AND DAVID HOLLEY
Times Staff Writers

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir V. Putin won a broad mandate for a second term Sunday, consolidating his lock on power in an election that left the entire opposition — from pro-democracy forces to the Communist Party — a shambles.

After a campaign scrupulously managed by the Kremlin with little real debate, Putin took a commanding lead over his five challengers, surprising no one when he collected 70% of the vote in incomplete returns. The most important question — whether the majority of voters were sufficiently disillusioned to stay away from the polls and in the process invalidate the election — was resolved as turnout exceeded 64%.

Three months ago, Putin's allies won a substantial majority in parliament. He now exerts such sweeping control that his program — sharply expanding the economy, taking back more control of Russia's oil wealth, fighting corruption and reasserting Russia's global influence — will unquestionably set the course of the next four years.

But he pledged to build democratic institutions and pursue a foreign policy based on compromise. "We will strive to guarantee the national interests of the Russian Federation, but in no case will we sink to using aggressive methods of pursuing our goals, whatever the justification," Putin said in a victory speech early today.

The campaign was characterized by the lack of significant opposition to the widely popular president, who is seen as a force for stability after the economic [See Putin, Page A4]

Suspect in Madrid Attacks Was Subject of 2001 Inquiry

A search of the Moroccan's home uncovered links to Al Qaeda, investigators say.

By SEBASTIAN ROTELLA
Times Staff Writer

MADRID — A Moroccan arrested in last week's train bombings here surfaced nearly three years ago in an investigation that indicated he had wide-ranging contacts with Islamic extremists, including a group later accused of complicity in the Sept. 11 attacks, according to court documents and interviews Sunday.

Spanish police searched the Madrid apartment of Jamal Zougam in August 2001, according to investigators. The search revealed that Zougam, 30, associated with key figures in a Madrid Al Qaeda cell whose alleged leader, Imad Eddin Barakat, was jailed three months later on suspicion of helping plot the attacks in the United States that year, according to Spanish court documents.

Police determined that Zougam was a follower of Barakat, a Spanish citizen born in Syria, and they wiretapped at least one phone conversation between the two, documents show. Zougam also had ties to Ansar al Islam, the largely Kurdish group now

active in terrorist attacks in Iraq, and to suspects in last year's suicide bombings in Casablanca, Morocco, that killed 45 people, including 12 bombers.

But Zougam was not among the nearly 50 suspected extremists who were arrested in a post-Sept. 11 crackdown led by Baltasar Garzon, a top Spanish anti-terrorism magistrate. Zougam sold cellular phone equipment at a store he ran with his half-brother, Mohamed Chaoui, who also was arrested in the train bombings, police and neighbors said. A third Moroccan suspect in the bombings later became a business partner, they said.

The Moroccans are sus- [See Terrorism, Page A6]

Silicon Valley's Changing Landscape

Seeking cheaper labor and a global market, many firms are keeping their U.S. headquarters but shifting most of their jobs overseas.

By JOSEPH MENN
Times Staff Writer

SAN JOSE — Outside the gray ranch house in a quiet and well-tended neighborhood, a ceramic frog guards a flower bed.

The house is pretty much the same as the others on Woodford Drive, except for the plastic sign on the wall that says "Easic Corp." Inside, in the dining room and family room, there's a daybed for the dog, brass plaques memorializing the chip-design firm's patents and five employees setting strategy, reviewing software and sending e-mail to programming colleagues in Romania.



HOME OFFICE: Easic Corp. founder and CEO Zvi Or-Bach, holding his dog Gucci, is surrounded by employees who work in his house, which serves as the chip-design firm's headquarters.

It looks a lot like the future of Silicon Valley. Easic's founder, President and Chief Executive Zvi Or-Bach, hired the Romanians for the same reason he keeps Easic's headquarters in his three-bedroom house,

where a secondhand mobile home in the backyard accommodates overflow employees.

"Obviously, it saves money," said Ze'ev Wurman, vice president of software development, noting that the Romanians'

salaries are one-tenth of programmers' wages in San Jose.

As Silicon Valley emerges from three years in the economic wilderness, it is taking on a new look. These days, many technology powerhouses no longer have thousands of locals employed to perform tasks ranging from designing software to cleaning the cafeteria.

The new Silicon Valley is a land of headquarters, a place where deals are made but not necessarily carried out.

The transformation echoes the evolution of Hollywood, which from its base in Southern California manages film shoots in Canada, animation in South Korea and special effects in New Zealand. In fact, the Silicon Valley tech sector is the latest addition to a long list: Generations ago, the textile industry sent factory and management jobs south from its New England base, for example, and later back-office jobs in financial services migrated [See Headquarters, Page A8]

INSIDE

Basketball Champs? For Some, It's Madness

The 64 teams in the NCAA tournament are all dreaming of a title. But not all dreams are created equal. Section 5

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Claims Don't Add Up

The Bush and Kerry campaigns are playing numbers games, Ronald Brownstein writes. A7

Old-Time Reality TV

HBO's new drama "Deadwood" takes a fresh, gritty approach to the battle between good and evil in the Old West. D1

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Suicide Bombers Kill 11 at Israeli Port

By LAURA KING
AND TAMI ZER
Special To The Times

ASHDOD, Israel — Two Palestinian suicide bombers infiltrated Israel's second-busiest harbor Sunday and set off explosions moments apart, killing themselves and 11 workers in the first attack on a major Israeli industrial complex in nearly 3½ years of conflict.

In a precedent perhaps even more worrisome for Israeli officials, the assailants carried out

the attack after slipping out of the Gaza Strip. Israel had fenced in Gaza and fortified its boundaries to prevent such attacks.

The bombings, which also injured about 20 port workers, scuttled plans for talks this week between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his Palestinian counterpart, Ahmed Korei. It would have been their first meeting.

When word of the bombing broke, officials from the two sides had just finished what both described as a cordial, though in-

conclusive, session to try to agree on a date and agenda for talks. Israel immediately canceled another preparatory session that was to have taken place today. The Sharon-Korei meeting, which Israeli media earlier said was likely to take place Tuesday, was put on indefinite hold.

The bombing also rekindled debate in Israel over Sharon's proposed withdrawal of Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. Violence has been escalating in [See Israel, Page A5]



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COLUMN ONE



Photographs by STEPHEN OSMAN Los Angeles Times

CONSERVATION: Big Sur, which draws 4 million visitors a year, offers breathtaking views. But some residents complain that so much land has been preserved, the community is being squeezed.

Big Sur Seeks to Shore Up Community

[Big Sur, from Page A1]
of those are owned by land trusts that also prohibit development.

Most of the land in public hands was included in the Los Padres National Forest and the Ventana Wilderness long before concerns arose over the public-private mix. Historic planning documents envisioned that 60% of the land along the Big Sur coast would remain in public hands, but today it's almost 70%, not including land-trust property.

"When I look out over Big Sur now, I don't just see beauty. . . . I see my community being dismantled, one parcel at a time," said Mike Caplin, a welder who represents a group called the Coastal Property Owners Assn.

Not everyone thinks things are as bad as Caplin's group does. Still, anxiety over the future of the Big Sur community is widespread enough that two citizens committees issued a report last year calling on the county to oppose new parks that would bring more tourists to the area, saying they would contribute to crowding and snarl traffic on California 1. The panels also said the community should have veto power over any new purchases of private property by land trusts.

Environmentalists dismiss these ideas out of hand.

"Statements like 'The Big Sur community is going to be exterminated' — this is not true," said Zad Leavy, 73, founder and counsel for the Big Sur Land Trust. "There isn't enough money to buy them out in Big Sur."

Arguments that Big Sur could be preserved out of existence "don't seem logical to me," said Gary Patton, executive director of LandWatch Monterey County. To Patton, the property owners' complaints are simply a backlash against the hard-won environmental gains that have kept Big Sur's spectacular landscape intact for the millions of people who visit each year. "Current laws are quite protective," Patton said. "People up there resent that."

Land-use experts say the forces at work in Big Sur are no different, except in scale, from what's happening up and down the California coast. Competition for land has inflated housing prices out of reach. Even if no more land is bought up by the government and various land trusts, middle-income people "are going to be driven out one way or the other," said Bill Fulton, a land-policy researcher.

Maybe so, but Monterey County officials are taking seriously the landowner complaints. A new plan for the future of Big Sur and the county, released recently, makes preservation of the Big Sur community a priority. Among its policies, the document would relax restrictions on nontraditional homes, such as those made of hay bales and other unusual materials, in hopes of restoring some of Big



TOURISTS: Annie and Mark Cesario of Monterey enjoy the Big Sur River, which they have been visiting for 20 years. The median home price in Big Sur has nearly tripled in five years to \$1.65 million, and the average age of residents is more than 45.

Big Sur

Big Sur refers to the 90-mile stretch of natural coastline from Carmel to San Simeon along Highway 1.

Population: Just over 800 people — fewer than in the 1880s.

Settled: Permanent settlers first arrived just over 100 years ago.

Amenities: Highway 1 was completed in 1937. Electricity arrived in the early '50s.

Literature: Robert Louis Stevenson used the scenery as a backdrop for the tale of Treasure Island, which he was making up for his stepson. Other literary works: "A Confederate General from Big Sur," by Richard Brautigan; "Big Sur," by Jack Kerouac.

Attractions: Big Sur's geography offers hiking, backpacking as well as scenic driving for recreational enthusiasts. There are two hot springs open to the public, Sykes Hot Springs and one located at the Esalen Institute.



Sources: www.bigsurcalifornia.org; "Big Sur: History of Big Sur," Ca., by Robert Wernick Los Angeles Times

Sur's legendary "funkiness." The plan also would ease housing-density provisions to allow the construction of clusters of low-cost workforce housing, up to a total of 300 units. In an unusual policy that would apply only to low-income housing in Big Sur, residents would be required to be employed solely in Big Sur.

"This proposal recognizes the need for critical workforce housing, and it goes a long way toward providing it," said Lynn

Burgess, a county planner.

The 20-year planning document also says any future land-trust purchases should preserve any residences on the property to prevent the loss of any more homes in Big Sur.

"The purchase of private land by public agencies has increased to the point that it is something of real concern to the community down there," said Monterey County Supervisor David Potter, a seven-year member of the

Coastal Commission and among the most reliably liberal votes on the board. "We really cannot afford to . . . lose the community component."

Whether the new recommendations will be adopted is unclear. The county is only one of the agencies with a voice in land-use issues in Big Sur and Monterey County. But everyone involved agrees the stakes are high. So far, the county has spent two years and \$4 million on the planning effort. Public meetings have been fraught with so much conflict that a citizens committee created to find compromises between pro- and anti-development lobbies broke up after it couldn't even agree on the meaning of "consensus."

Despite its emphasis on saving the Big Sur community, the new plan does not put limits on tourism, nor will it give the community a veto over new land acquisitions.

"We can't legally prohibit the acquisition of property from a willing seller to a willing buyer," Potter said.

Caplin and his folks may be even less pleased by a proposal under consideration by the Coastal Commission, another major agency with power over land-use planning in Big Sur. Among other things, it would prohibit buildings that could interfere with the views of boaters passing by in the ocean. "Some people in the community are not going to be happy about that," Potter said.

Big Sur is not a single place, but a cluster of rural community centers — Big Sur Valley, Lucia, Pacific Valley and Gorda — strung along the coast highway. Its world-famous parks, camp-



CLEANUP: An area resident showers with warm spring water that runs out of a drainage pipe in Big Sur.

sites and inns draw 4 million visitors a year.

Driving along Highway 1, still the only road through the thicket of redwood and sugar pine, it's easy to see why preservationists put out a call two decades ago to save Big Sur from the bulldozers. Its forest canopy and the 50 separate streams that rush down to the sea look much as they did when Henry Miller lived here in the '50s.

Leavy, the Big Sur Land Trust founder, proudly takes some credit for that. The land trust, he said, has helped pre-

serve 30,000 acres in and around Big Sur. "We've made a big difference," he said.

If you want to know what Big Sur might have become, activists say, look down the road at Pebble Beach, with its manicured and tamed housing developments and golf courses.

In Big Sur, "the coastal drama and vistas have been preserved. Public access has increased. The flora and fauna have been addressed," Potter said. "Now, the character of the community needs to be addressed."

Businesses, especially those that opened only in recent years and paid top dollar for their properties, are being squeezed by the hard economics that have hit many resort operators since 9/11.

Stan Russell, a 47-year-old web designer, came to Big Sur from Los Angeles six years ago. He thought he knew what he was getting into. "I was determined to tough it out," he said. Soon, his business was going well. A dozen resorts signed on as clients. But after losing his first apartment, the best he could find was a one-bedroom, \$1,400-a-month place with holes in the wall. Russell moved to Santa Cruz and now handles his Big Sur business from there. In his spare time, he answers the phones at the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce — from Santa Cruz.

One issue that almost inevitably comes up in any discussion of the challenges facing Big Sur is absentee homeowners. Actors and businesspeople like Ted Turner fly in to spend a few days in paradise. Holed up in trophy houses behind high iron gates, it goes without saying they do not volunteer as soccer coaches.

In the Coastlands development, where real estate agent Bob Cross lives, "we used to have nine absentees out of 30 homes. Now we have only nine that live here full time."

All this has had an inevitable impact on the culture of the community. Longtime residents say that while the landscape is virtually unchanged, the place has lost a lot of the funky informality that drew thousands of seekers in their VW vans 30 years ago. "For people who remember [Big Sur] from the '70s, it doesn't have the same feel," said Jim Colangelo, a top Monterey County administrator.

The starry-eyed seekers have been replaced by a harder core of semi-permanent drifters in the hills, according to county officials. "People live in trailers and wigwams and tents and yards," said Gaffill, the Nepenthe co-owner, whose grandfather built the restaurant next to the cabin he bought from Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth, naming it for a Greek term for "surcease from sorrow." "Then you can see Tuscan manors with electric gates. It's all over the place."