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### Brown is bent on building a reserve

His budget aims for a cushion, but pensions, healthcare and other fiscal problems loom.

### By Chris Megerian

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown stepped out from behind the podium holding a green marker, ready to assume the role of professor.

As he laid out his new budget plan, he circled the spot on a chart showing California's budding surplus. Some people think "we should go on a spending binge," he said.

He wouldn't do that, Brown said: "We see the lessons of history."

If anyone in the Capitol knows California history, it's the 75-year-old governor serving his second stint in office. On his watch, recent deficits have disappeared amid a combination of budget cuts, tax hikes and economic luck.

However, other deeprooted financial problems remain unresolved: big bills for teacher pensions, rising healthcare costs, a volatile tax system that can leave officials with whiplash. Brown has only begun to address some of these issues.

In the coming months, the governor will negotiate a final budget with a Legislature dominated by Democrats, who may be eager to expand social services and education programs in an

education programs in an Retailers pense of im

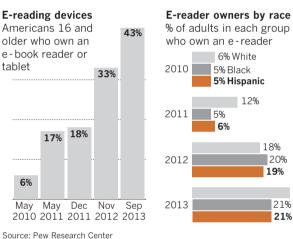
ridden Spanish versions that sold poorly.

The upshot was that even in heavily Latino cities such as Los Angeles, where Spanish-language television and radio command huge audiences, readers of *libros en español* found little more than bilingual dictionaries and religious tracts buried in the backs of bookstores.

"There was a tremendous appetite for Spanishlanguage books that wasn't being met," said David Kipen, who runs Libros Schmibros, a used-book store in Boyle Heights with a large Latino clientele. "We might have 1,000 books in Spanish, but we're always ravenous for more."

### A growing market

The number of e-reading device owners is rising. Among them, Latinos are one of the groups with the fastest adoption rates on e-book readers.



## Solar power's outlook not as sunny

Projects stall amid uncertainty about the future of big tax breaks and utilities' willingness to buy the pricier electricity.

By Julie Cart

Five years after the Obama administration's renewable energy initiative touched off a building boom of large-scale solar power plants across the desert Southwest, the pace of development has slowed to a crawl, with a number of companies going out of business and major projects canceled for lack of financing.

Of the 365 federal solar applications since 2009, just 20 plants are on track to be built. Only three large-scale solar facilities have gone online, two in California and one in Nevada. The first auction of public land for solar developers, an event once highly anticipated by federal planners, failed to draw a single bid last fall.

Several factors are responsible, industry analysts say. The tight economy has made financing difficult to obtain, and the federal government has not said whether it will continue to offer tax credits of the size



**LIBROS SCHMIBROS**, in Boyle Heights, has a large Latino clientele. "We might have 1,000 books in Spanish, but we're always ravenous for more," bookstore operator David Kipen said.

*E-libros* gain U.S. readers The Kindle and Nook help Spanish-language publishers flourish

#### By Ken Bensinger

For decades, finding Spanish-language books in the U.S. was like tilting at windmills.

Booksellers stocked few titles in the language of Cervantes, and those they carried came at a hefty premium. A paperback copy of "Don Quijote" in the original Spanish could easily cost triple the price of a deluxe hard-bound translation in English — if it could be found at all.

Retailers blamed the expense of importing books

In that process, Brown will have to avoid the mistakes of the 1990s, when California's situation was remarkably similar to today's [See **Brown**, A16] printed in Spain and Latin America. And U.S. publishers lost faith in the market after botched attempts to translate English-language bestsellers produced error-

But lately, thanks in big part to the Internet, the na-[See Libros, A12]

JAVIER ZARRACINA Los Angeles Times

26%

### ARIEL SHARON, 1928 - 2014



JIM HOLLANDER European Pressphoto Agency

**WARRIOR OF ISRAEL** Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon long pushed Jewish settlement in the Palestinian territories. Eventually, he had a change of heart.

# Israeli leader was revered and reviled

The controversial Ariel Sharon, who was felled by a stroke in 2006, is dead at 85.

> By Laura King and Edmund Sanders reporting from jerusalem

o his enemies, Ariel Sharon was "an Israeli Caesar," whose dreams of remaking the Middle East dragged the Jewish state into dangerous conflicts. He was reviled by Palestinians and some of his own countrymen, who regarded many of his acts as tantamount to war crimes.

Among his admirers, however, Sharon was "the Bulldozer," the warrior-statesman whose unwavering belief in military might and a pioneering spirit ensured Israel's survival in a hostile region. Despite many ups and downs during a long career, he was lauded as one of Israel's greatest leaders.

Sharon, the former Israeli prime minister and general, who fought in nearly all of his nation's major wars and spearheaded Jewish settlement of Palestinian territories, then years later presided over Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, died Saturday. He was 85.

Elected prime minister in 2001 after holding nearly every major ministerial post, he was removed from office at the peak of his power after a severe stroke in 2006 that left him incapacitated. Despite some signs of brain activity, he never regained consciousness, and in late December his condition turned critical as his organs deteriorated.

Sharon's death at a hospital near Tel Aviv was announced by his son Gilad.

"That's it. He's gone. He went when he decided to go," his [See **Sharon**, A8]



dal is part of a long tradition of hardball politics. NATION, A18

### Almonds are the toast of the world

Global demand for the California-grown nut is surging, but tightening water supplies are a worry. **BUSINESS, B1** 

#### Danger zone at the Olympics

As the Winter Games showcase more extreme sports, the risk of injury rises. **SPORTS, C1** 

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that brought a rush of interest in large-scale solar five years ago.

"I would say we are in an assessment period," said Amit Ronen, director of the George Washington University Solar Institute. "Nobody's going to break ground on any big new solar projects right now — utilities want to see how farms coming online this year fit into the grid, and developers are waiting for more certainty about state policies and federal tax credits."

Another, somewhat unexpected issue is the difficulty solar developers are having negotiating agreements to sell their power to large utilities. The agreements reached to date guarantee solar providers higher rates than utilities pay for power from traditional energy sources.

Utilities had been willing to pay more because many states, including California, require them to derive a significant percentage of their power from renewable energy sources. But now utilities in many states are on track to meet those requirements, giving them less incentive to buy higher-priced solar energy — especially as a steep decline in natural gas prices has cut the cost of power [See Solar, A14]

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