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'Easter eggs'

Knowing where to look pays off in this special DVD scavenger hunt



CAPITOL & CALIFORNIA ▶ A3

Davis' job approval at an all-time low

SPORTS ▶ C1

Why won't Christie shoot the ball?

WEATHER ▶ B8



Partly cloudy 65|47

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Peterson case may be linked to bodies

By M.S. Enkoji and Elizabeth Hume BEE STAFF WRITERS

RICHMOND - A decomposed, female body was found Monday on a beach at Richmond's Point Isabel, about a mile from where the body of an infant boy was found the day before, touching off speculation that the adult was Laci Peterson, the missing, pregnant Modesto woman.

Norman Lepera, police chief with the East Bay Regional Park Police Department, said a department helicopter was sent to Modesto to pick up a detective and two crime scene investigators Monday afternoon. They were joined at the scene by a police lieutenant and an investigator from the Stanislaus County District Attorney's Office.

Laci Peterson was 27 and eight months pregnant when she disappeared from her home Dec. 24.

"There is nothing at this point that indicates that it's her," said Modesto Police Sgt. Ron Cloward, who has supervised the search for Peterson.

The woman's body was undergoing an autopsy Monday night in Martinez, said Jimmy Lee, a spokesman for the

▶ BODY, back page, A20

California's tax bite bad but not worst

By Alexa H. Bluth BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

To the one in three California taxpayers scurrying to the post office today, or to the groups battling tax increase proposals, this might come as a surprise: Californians do not have the highest tax burden in the nation.

But it is far from the lowest. California ranks eighth-highest in state and local taxes per capita - behind such states as Maine, New York and Minnesota, according to an analysis by the Tax Foundation, a Washington-based nonpartisan tax research group.

California's Proposition 13 - which has limited property tax increases for 25 years - has helped keep the state's tax burden down compared to other states. But the state's ranking has surged in recent years in large part from capital gains taxes collected during the technology boom, and lawmakers now are debating whether to raise a variety of fees and taxes to help erase a

▶ TAX, page A16

BAGHDAD CALMING

Looting eases somewhat in the capital as Iraqi police and U.S. troops begin jointly patrolling the city's streets.

HOMEWARD BOUND

Two aircraft carrier battle groups - the Kitty Hawk and the Constellation - will leave the gulf this week and return to their home ports.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS?

Troops uncover 11 mobile labs buried near Karbala that may have been used to make weapons of mass destruction.

Troops take Tikrit without feared fight



New York Times/James Hill

Marines celebrate the capture of a palace in Tikrit on Monday as U.S. forces took control of the last major center that had been in the hands of Saddam Hussein loyalists.



Colin Powell

U.S. to Syria: Time to clean up your act

By David Westphal BEE WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

The secretary of state said the United States would examine diplomatic, economic and other measures for Syria. He also warned the Iraq war has created a "new situation in the region" that should cause Syria and other Middle East countries to review their policies.

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration Monday sharply intensified its pressure on Syria, saying the government must quit harboring Iraqi leaders, end sponsorship of terrorist organizations and jettison chemical weapons programs.

Officials at the White House, Pentagon and State Department stopped short of threatening military action, but neither did they rule it out. "We always leave options on tables, but our course of action with Syria is focused on reminding Syria that this is a good time for them to re-examine their support of terrorism," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer. "And a good place to begin is with their harboring of these Iraqi leaders who have fled to Syria."

Secretary of State Colin Powell said the United States would examine diplomatic, economic and other measures with an eye toward pressuring Syria. In the meantime, he said, the Iraq war has cre-

▶ SYRIA, page A14



Americans overwhelmingly consider the war in Iraq a success, according to the latest New York Times/CBS poll. ▶ Page A14

Hours before Iraqis are scheduled to meet for the first time to start charting their path to democracy, fighting begins. ▶ Page A17

Iraqi police and U.S. troops begin jointly patrolling the troubled Iraqi capital. ▶ Page A18

Albert Pride, a former Sacramento track and field star, is an Army lieutenant in Iraq. ▶ Page B1

Fall of last city changes focus of war

BEE STAFF AND NEWS SERVICES

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, QATAR - U.S. Marines took control of Tikrit on Monday, seizing the last significant Baath Party stronghold in Iraq and changing the focus of the U.S. campaign from grabbing territory to targeting pockets of resistance, rebuilding war-ravaged infrastructure and creating a new system of government.

U.S. officials said the Marines who captured Tikrit, in the ancestral region of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, encountered lighter-than-expected resistance, which came mostly from paramilitary Baath loyalists instead of the organized military defenses some had feared.

With the fall of the city, the Pentagon declared an end to large-scale combat in Iraq. As a result, it said, two aircraft carrier battle groups, some Air Force bombers and other strike aircraft will be leaving the region.

While U.S. troops in Iraq still face danger, "I would anticipate that the major combat engage-

▶ WAR, page A15



For more information:

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- To hear audio clips from McClatchy Newspapers reporter Kevin Diaz in Qatar and photographer Mike Zerby in Iraq
- For updates on coalition casualties
- For world reaction, see: ▶ sacbee.com/iraq
- To post your thoughts in sacbee.com's Iraq Forum: ▶ forums.sacbee.com/iraq

U.S. shifts to 'nation-building' to fix a broken Afghanistan

By Marc Kaufman WASHINGTON POST

KABUL, Afghanistan - Sixteen months after the ruling Taliban fell and Hamid Karzai took over as president, Afghanistan is still struggling to establish the basics of a working government. As Karzai and his U.S. and international supporters have found, virtually every significant system in the country is broken.

The military is splintered by factionalism, the police force is untrained, the justice system is dominated by religious conservatives who have more in com-

mon with the Taliban than with Karzai, and tax collection is ineffective. Even driving rules are in disarray: Afghans drive on the right side of the road, but during the past chaotic decade, most of the cars brought into the country were designed for left-side driving - a situation that leads to many accidents but is beyond the government's ability to fix.

As a result, when U.S. policy-makers discuss rebuilding Afghanistan, they no longer talk exclusively about new



Hamid Karzai

schools, roads and services for needy people. Now they talk just as much about establishing functioning government agencies and about spreading the authority of the central government beyond Kabul.

Initially opposed to the idea of "nation-building," the Bush administration has found that it is the key to Afghanistan's future.

"That opposition to nation-building is a fig leaf that dropped a while ago," said the U.S. Embassy spokesman here, Al-

berto Fernandez.

"We're up to our ears in nation-building."

A look at the pace and nature of reconstruction in Afghanistan over the past three months shows that the United States is often acting with a sense of urgency and that U.S. rebuilding efforts reach into almost every aspect of Afghan life. U.S. officials say the total budget for Afghan aid this year - excluding the cost of maintaining 8,000 U.S. troops here - will probably match last year's \$935 million.

But the needs of the continuing U.S.-

▶ AFGHANISTAN, back page, A20

INSIDE THE BEE

BUSINESS ▶ D1

Placing the neighbors

In Grass Valley, boutique wine-grape growers adhere to an environmental ethic rooted deep in the soil of Nevada County.



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