



Johnny Damon watches his first-inning homer

# Boston 2004 World Champion SOX CURSE DIES

SPORTS / 1C



## LIFESTYLE Fannie Flagg sets new book in state / 1E

# The Birmingham News

Thursday, October 28, 2004

Our 117th year • 50¢

www.al.com/birminghamnews

E M 1 2 3

## Resistance to private prison is strong

### Perry group raises several concerns

By CARLA CROWDER  
News staff writer

UNIONTOWN — Every Thursday night, a group known as the Concerned Citizens of Perry County gathers at the Stockyard Cafe off U.S. 80. They talk about politics, how to create better jobs and other issues dear to this struggling Black Belt county.

Recently, the hot topic has been the private prison in the woods down the road, on brushy, woodsy land adjacent to mobile homes and cow pastures. This group is trying to keep it out.

The Perry County Commission last spring entered into a partnership with the Louisiana-based LCS Corrections, a company that runs for-profit prisons, including one housing some Alabama women. Commissioners say it will bring much-needed jobs.

“We have enough problems as it is without bringing prisoners into our community.”

Robert James Johnson

Concerned Citizens of Perry County, which opposes plans for private prison

“Since this is a private prison, we know that we as citizens will have no influence or impact over how that prison is run,” Mary Lelia Schaeffer told fellow members of the group last week.

“We have enough problems as it is without bringing prisoners into our community,” said Robert James Johnson, another member.

Uniontown has a high crime rate and chronic drug infestations. The largest employer is a catfish plant where wages are low, and the main road through town is flanked by public housing projects.

But Concerned Citizens believes renewal is possible. The group — which counts preachers, teachers, retirees and a former mayor as members — is

► See Perry, Page 2A

## Images begin to reveal the mysterious Titan

NASA's Cassini spacecraft beamed back more than 500 images of Titan, Saturn's mysterious moon, Tuesday and Wednesday after flying to within 745 miles of the moon's surface. The images suggest a smooth, perhaps flat, surface with contrasting light and dark patches. Some images, below, show Titan in ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths. Red and green colors represent infrared wavelengths and show areas where atmospheric methane absorbs light. These colors reveal a brighter (redder) Northern Hemisphere. Blue represents ultraviolet wavelengths and shows the high atmosphere and detached hazes. **More on Titan / 7A**



EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY



NASA

## Prehistoric dwarf skeletons found

### Hobbit-sized creature lived on Pacific island

By JOSEPH B. VERRENGIA  
The Associated Press

In a breathtaking discovery, scientists working on a remote Indonesian island say they have uncovered the bones of a human dwarf species marooned for eons while modern man rapidly colonized the rest of the planet.

One tiny specimen, an adult female measuring about 3 feet tall, is described as “the most extreme” figure to be included in the extended human family. Certainly, she is the shortest.

This Hobbit-sized creature appears to have lived as recently as 18,000 years ago on the island of Flores, a kind of tropical Lost World that was populated by giant lizards and miniature elephants.

She is the best example of a trove of fragmented bones that account for

as many as seven of these primitive individuals. Scientists have named the new species *Homo floresiensis*, or Flores Man. The specimens' ages range from 95,000 to 12,000 years old.

The discovery has astonished anthropologists unlike any in recent memory. Flores Man is a totally new creature that was fundamentally different from modern humans. Yet it lived until the threshold of recorded

► See Dwarf, Page 6A

### CAMPAIGN 2004

# Bush, Kerry trade blasts

## President speaks out on news of missing 377 tons of explosives in Iraq

By WILLIAM DOUGLAS and JAMES KUHNHENN  
Knight Ridder Newspapers

LITITZ, Pa. — President Bush accused Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry on Wednesday of “saying almost anything to get elected” for trying to make a campaign issue out of missing high-grade Iraqi explosives without knowing all the details.

Campaigning in Iowa, Kerry fired back, accusing the White House of “dodging and bobbing and weaving in their usual effort to avoid responsibility.”

With six days to go before Tuesday's election, Bush tried to reach out to Democratic voters in stops in Pennsylvania, Ohio and suburban Detroit. But the 377 tons of explosives that disappeared from an Iraqi weapons facility overshadowed that effort and forced him to defend his handling of the Iraq war, the cornerstone of his re-election bid.

“Now the senator is making wild charges about missing explosives when his top foreign policy adviser admits (they) do not know the facts,” Bush told a rally in Lititz. “Think about that. The senator is denigrating the actions of our troops and commanders in the field without knowing the facts.”

Bush's comments Wednesday were his first about the explosives. The interim Iraqi government earlier this month told the International Atomic Energy Agency about the missing cache.

► See Campaign, Page 9A

### INSIDE

► Early voters casting ballots at runaway pace / 9A

► P. Diddy urges young people to “Vote or Die” / 9A

## Absentee voting at record levels in Jeffco, Shelby

By ROBERT K. GORDON  
News staff writer

Jefferson and Shelby County voters are casting absentee ballots this year in record numbers, election officials said.

“I think a lot of people are voting because of the problems in the last presidential election,” Tressie Ezell of Bessemer said. “People didn't think it was fair and really want to vote this time.”

Ezell, who has already cast her absentee ballot, is having surgery next week in Mobile. She votes in every election, and she especially didn't want to miss this one.

Alabama does not have early voting as some other states, so if voters aren't able to vote on Election Day, they can cast an absentee ballot. State law allows absentee voting for several reasons, including being out of the county or state on Election Day, or being physically incapacitated.

The deadline for obtaining an absentee ballot is 5 p.m. today except for a business or medical emergency.

Ballots must be returned to the clerk's office before or on Tuesday, Election Day.

Earl Carter, the circuit clerk in Jefferson County's Bessemer division, said he will easily break his

► See Voters, Page 2A

### SHELBY COUNTY

## Developments to stir up ‘sleepy towns’

Dan Wilson sweeps the front porch of Tools Plus in Harpersville. The town sits on a 10-mile stretch of U.S. 280 that has remained, until now, untouched by the county's phenomenal growth.



NEWS STAFF/FRANK COUCH

### Harpersville, Vincent, Westover set for new growth

By LISA OSBURN  
News staff writer

Westover Mayor Mark McLaughlin never thought he would appreciate a slight delay in a private sewer system along U.S. 280 that will open up his town for major retail and residential development.

But the way McLaughlin sees it, Westover and nearby communities Harpersville and Vincent

have about 18 months to get their act together because growth is coming and it will come fast.

“We have noticed a surge in the level of interest, both residential and retail,” McLaughlin said. “There is nothing that I can announce, but we have had a great surge of interest, a tremendous surge of interest.”

The 10-mile stretch of U.S. 280 just east of Chelsea is one area of Shelby County that has remained, until now, untouched by the county's phenomenal growth. Shelby County, the fastest growing county in Alabama,

► See Growth, Page 2A

### INDEX

Classified 1F  
Comics 4E  
Deaths 6B  
Editorials 10A  
Just For Kids 8E  
LifeStyle 1E  
Local News 1B  
Money 1D  
Movies 3E  
Sports 1C  
Television 6E  
Weather 8B

### WEATHER

Details / 8B

High  
80



Low  
65

18 to 20 Pelham football  
players suspended over party  
SPORTS / 1C

### INSIDE

SouthTrust, Wachovia cuts  
expected to start next week  
MONEY / 1D

For home delivery, call  
205-325-4444



6 58884 10001 1