

Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat's Health Worsens A10

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The Ledger

Thursday, October 28, 2004 50¢

LAKELAND, FLORIDA

www.theledger.com

LAKELAND EDITION

WEST OF BAGHDAD

Key Fight May Be Looming In Iraq

By **ROBERT H. REID**
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — An uptick in airstrikes and other military moves points to an imminent showdown between U.S. forces and Sunni Muslim insurgents west of Baghdad — a decisive battle that could determine whether the campaign to bring democracy and stability to Iraq can succeed.

American officials have not confirmed a major assault is near against the insurgent bastions of Fallujah and neighboring Ramadi. But Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has warned Fallujah leaders that force will be used if they do not hand over extremists, including terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

A similar escalation in U.S. military actions and Iraqi government warnings occurred before a major offensive in Najaf forced militiamen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to give up that holy city in late August. And U.S. and Iraqi troops retook Samarra from insurgents early this month.

Now U.S. airstrikes on purported al-Zarqawi positions in three neighborhoods of eastern and northern Fallujah, 40 miles west of Baghdad, have increased. And residents reported this week that Marines appeared to be reinforcing forward positions near key areas of the city. Other military units are on the move, including 800 British soldiers headed north to the U.S.-controlled zone.

PLEASE SEE IRAQ, PAGE A11

Dwarf Skeleton May Alter History

By **JOSEPH B. VERRENGIA**
The Associated Press

In an astonishing discovery that could rewrite the history of human evolution, scientists say they have found the skeleton of a new human species, a dwarf, marooned for eons in a tropical Lost World while modern man rapidly colonized the rest of the planet.

The finding on a remote Indonesian island has stunned anthropologists like no other in recent memory. It is a fundamentally new creature that bears more of a resemblance to fictional, barefooted hobbits than modern humans.

Yet biologically speaking, it may have been closely related to us and perhaps even shared its caves with our ancestors.

The 3-foot-tall adult female skeleton found in a cave is believed 18,000 years old. It smashes the long-cherished scientific belief that our species, Homo sapiens, systematically crowded out other upright-walking human cousins beginning 160,000 years ago and that we have had Earth to ourselves for tens of thousands of years.

Instead, it suggests recent evolution was more complex than previously thought.

And it demonstrates that Africa, the acknowledged cradle of humanity, does not hold all the

PLEASE SEE SKELETON, PAGE A9



Boston **3** **WORLD SERIES** 0 St. Louis **CARDINALS**

Curse Is Broken!



SUE OGROCKI/The Associated Press

With Clean Sweep, Red Sox End 86 Years of Heartbreak

Boston Red Sox first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz, left, and catcher Jason Varitek jump on pitcher Keith Foulke after beating the St. Louis Cardinals in Game 4 of the World Series on Wednesday in St. Louis. The sweep gives the Red Sox the crown for the first time since 1918 and breaks the fabled curse that many believe began when the team sold Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees in 1920.

COMPLETE GAME COVERAGE G1

INSIDE

TIP OF THE DAY
The Cricket Club Parade begins at 4 p.m. at First Avenue and Main Street downtown Bartow. The club's carnival will follow at IMC Park.

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Storm Debris Gradually Disappearing

Another month of work needed to get Polk cleared of clutter from hurricanes.

Ledger staff

BARTOW — The giant mounds of limbs and tree trunks and dead leaves are slowly disappearing, but it will still be more than a month before neighborhoods are finally rid of hurricane debris.

Countywide, more than 2 million cubic yards of debris — enough to fill a football field 100 stories high — was knocked to the ground by the three storms that battered the county in August in September.

Polk County officials have agreed to front 15 of the county's 17 municipalities the money necessary for the cleanup effort that is expected to end Dec. 12.

Lakeland and Frostproof decided to pay for their own cleanups.

The county has hired Alabama-based Crowder-Gulf to handle storm debris



RICK RUNION/The Ledger

John Reed uses a track hoe to pile debris from three hurricanes at the Glendale dump site in Lakeland this week. The broken tree limbs and other vegetation are being processed into mulch at the site.

PLEASE SEE DEBRIS, PAGE A8

Pumpkin Pie Showdown

A comparison of fresh and canned fillings yields tasty results.

D1▶



ELECTION 2004 | PRESIDENT

Bush, Kerry Campaigns Intensify

President seeks help from dissatisfied Democrats while challenger says Bush "doesn't get it."

By **BY DAVID ESPO & TOM RAUM**

The Associated Press

LITITZ, Pa. — President Bush summoned support from Democrats whose "dreams and goals are not found in the far left wing" of their own party Wednesday in a late-campaign appeal for crossover votes. Sen. John Kerry said that when it comes to Iraq, the man in the White House "doesn't get it, and he can't fix it."

Bush has made a habit of "dodging and bobbing and weav-

ing" when it comes to tons of missing explosives outside Baghdad, added the four-term Massachusetts senator, and Vice President Dick Cheney "is becoming the Chief Minister of Disinformation."

The president accused his rival of "wild charges" unbecoming a man with ambitions for the Oval Office.

Six days before the election, the president and his Democratic challenger appeared before large late-October crowds as their aides and outside groups made strategic adjustments for the campaign's endgame.

Bush's high command put extra money into television commercials in Portland, Maine — a bid to claim victory in next-door New Hampshire, where recent polls show Kerry the narrow

PLEASE SEE CAMPAIGN, PAGE A4

Election Becomes Bitter Tug of War

Florida prominent in political war that is being fought with lawyers and lawsuits.



By **MIKE WILLIAMS**

Cox News Service

ORLANDO — Sheri Heitker was making a smooth sales pitch, but the prospective voter was not buying.

"We had a huge surplus and now it's gone," said Heitker, a volunteer for Democratic presidential contender John Kerry's campaign who was going door-to-door to encourage voters in a working-class neighborhood. "Now we're trillions in debt. That's money your children are going to have to pay back."

"Yes, I know," said a middle-aged man who had come to his screen door shirtless. "But any president would do what Bush

■ Unusual electoral scenarios possible. **PAGE A3**

■ Cheney, Edwards campaign in Florida. **PAGE A4**

■ Martinez defends new ad. **PAGE B1**

has done after the terrorists flew those planes into the buildings." With less than a week to go, experts think the fight for the White House has come down to a few key states, Florida prominent among them, where the campaign has turned into a slugging match edged with a raw intensity rarely seen in modern political history.

Both camps — along with an array of independent groups — have organized small armies of volunteers and paid workers who are pounding

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