

The Modesto Bee



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Solar array over the Turlock Irrigation District main canal near Turlock Lake on Wednesday.

Scott Peterson's latest appeal deemed meritless by judge

BY TREVOR MORGAN tmorgan@modbee.com

On Monday, a San Mateo County Superior Court judge shot down claims, based on "new evidence," that Scott Peterson, 53, received an unfair trial.

Peterson's defense team, the Los Angeles Innocence Project, filed a habeas corpus petition in August alleging that new research and evidence proved his innocence and that Stanislaus County prosecutors violated Peterson's rights to due process.

On Monday, Judge Elizabeth Hill disagreed. In her order denying LAIP's nearly 700 pages of claims, Hill wrote that all of them were either "procedurally barred, meritless, or both" and there was nothing "new, admissible, nor mate-

SEE PETERSON, 7A

Turlock, UC Merced test solar panels on canals

BY JOHN HOLLAND jholland@modbee.com

The Turlock Irrigation District was California's first such agency when it formed in 1887. On Wednesday, it showed off another pioneering feat.

TID got a \$20 million state grant in 2022 to test solar panels atop two short canal stretches. The arrays reduce evaporation of the Tuolumne River water while helping supply the district's power customers.

A UC Merced team is assessing whether the idea is worth spreading across the 4,000 or so miles of canal in California. A detailed report is due this

summer to the state Department of Water Resources. The findings so far are promising, the scientists said at Wednesday's gathering, which included a member of Gov. Gavin Newsom's Cabinet and other high-ranking officials.

They met next to a solar array on the main canal, about three miles downstream of Turlock Lake. It was completed in August, in the middle of the 2025 irrigation season. The other panels were ready six months earlier, just before the season's start, on a branch canal southwest of Keyes.

TID is the second agency in the United States to do such a solar project. The first was completed in 2024 on a Gila

River canal serving Phoenix. Both were preceded by a site in Gujarat, India.

The TID effort is called Project Nexus, aligning water and energy goals. The partners include Solar AquaGrid, a Berkeley-based company.

"We have learned so much," CEO Jordan Harris said on the canal bank Wednesday. "UC Merced researchers have been able to gather a whole irrigation season of data, and the results have been what we've been hoping to find."

TID's two sites combine for 5.7 megawatts of electricity. That is less than 1% of the peak demand of the 240,000 or so customers between south Modesto and northern Merced County. But the output could

surge if adopted elsewhere on the 250 miles of canal.

TID already had plenty of climate-safe sources as of 2024. Hydropower brought 31%, mostly from Don Pedro Reservoir. Wind turbines added 21%, including what's imported from the Pacific Northwest. Solar accounted for 6%, both local and imported. Almost all the rest came from burning natural gas, which is being phased out.

The state required utilities to get at least 33% of their power from clean sources by 2020. The mandate is 60% by 2030 and 100% by 2045.

SEE SOLAR PANELS, 7A

Iran delivers new proposal to US as Hormuz remains shut

BY PATRICK SYKES AND ELTAF NAJAFIZADA Bloomberg News

Iran delivered a new proposal to the U.S. and President Donald Trump vowed to maintain a naval blockade, as the two sides pursue behind-the-scenes diplomacy to turn a fragile ceasefire into a lasting peace.

Tehran relayed its latest position to Washington via Pakistan, which mediated a first round of direct negotiations last month, Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said on Friday.

The fate of the Strait of Hormuz - through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war - lies at the heart of the current stalemate. Both Iran and the U.S. have signaled they are waiting for the other to move first before they agree to ease restrictions on traffic.

IRNA didn't elaborate on what the Iranian proposal entailed on key issues such as

Hormuz or Iran's nuclear activities.

Trump said on Thursday that the blockade of Iranian ports is depriving the Islamic Republic of much-needed oil revenue, claiming the pressure would force Tehran back to the negotiating table.

"Good luck blockading a country with those borders," Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on X, referring to his country's large size. He and other Iranian officials say the blockade, which they insist must be lifted for the sides to go to new talks and for Hormuz to be reopened, will further push up oil prices.

Brent traded 3% lower at around \$110 a barrel on Friday, trimming this week's gains to just over 5%.

Trump was briefed at the White House on Thursday by the head of U.S. Central Command, which oversees American forces in the Middle East, and Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to Axios, which



PUNIT PARANJPE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/ TNS

Desh Garima, an Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, is seen docked at an offloading terminal along the coast in Mumbai on Thursday.

cited two unnamed U.S. officials. Axios reported earlier that Centcom had prepared a plan for a brief wave of strikes to break the negotiating deadlock.

The U.S. is pitching allies on a joint naval force to secure the Strait of Hormuz. New Zealand said it had received the proposal but would only support a U.S.-led coalition if a sustainable ceasefire was in place. The effort, called the "Maritime Freedom Construct," was spelled out in a State Department cable to U.S. embassies on Tuesday that called on diplomats to press foreign governments into sign-

ing up, the Wall Street Journal reported.

On Thursday, Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, cast doubt on the likelihood of a deal. He gave a rare statement in which he vowed not to give up the country's nuclear or missile technologies. He also signaled Tehran would keep control of the Hormuz strait.

Here's more on the war: •Iran activated air defenses around capital Tehran late on Thursday to counter reconnaissance drones. It's unclear what led to the activation.

SEE IRAN, 5A

No arrest kept school in dark on principal's sex charges

BY JULIETTA BISHARYAN jbisharyan@modbee.com

Brian Chubon, a former Modesto and Gustine principal, spent over a year fighting felony charges alleging sexual misconduct with a Merced County student. Because he was never arrested or booked, the case proceeded without his Modesto employer's knowledge.

If Chubon had undergone the standard fingerprinting process, the Modesto City Schools district would have been notified, putting his job at risk, a legal expert says.

Chubon, 53, was vice principal at Gustine High School when he allegedly engaged in sexual acts, including intercourse, with a 17-year-old student in spring 2022.

The Gustine Unified School District conducted an internal investigation into their relationship at the time, but both denied anything inappropriate was happening between them. The district notified the student's parents but did not contact child protective services or law enforcement.

Chubon continued to chaperone

SEE CHUBON, 5A



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