

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Marcos may face ally isolation

MANILA, Philippines — Some traditional allies of President Ferdinand Marcos appeared to distance themselves from his government Thursday, as European countries considered boycotting his inauguration and several ambassadors met with Corazon Aquino.

Aquino, Marcos' opponent in the disputed Feb. 7 election, met diplomats — including 12 ambassadors from 14 European countries and Japan. She told them she was determined to assume the presidency of the Philippines at the "earliest possible time."

None of the ambassadors specifically endorsed Aquino's claim that she won the election but was cheated out of victory. She had asked them not to recognize Marcos' government.

Ambassador Wieger Hellema of The Netherlands, acting as spokesman for 12 European Common Market nations' envoys, was asked about Marcos inauguration, set for Tuesday. "That is under consideration in the capitals" because of the fraud allegations, he said.

Asked if any of the countries were considering withdrawing recognition of Marcos' government, he said there

had been "no word on that." In Strasbourg, France, the European Parliament voted unanimously Thursday to blame Marcos for most of the reported abuses in the special elec-



Marcos

tion, called by Marcos in an effort to prove his popularity.

Japanese Ambassador Kiyoshi Sumiya, after meeting with Mrs. Aquino, told Japanese reporters she had asked him

not to attend the inauguration. He said he told Aquino he would relay the message to Tokyo.

Sumiya said his country has no intention of intervening in Philippine affairs but that he hoped "a bloody struggle" would be avoided, according to Japanese reporters.

Aquino, widow of assassinated opposition leader Benigno Aquino, has launched a nationwide campaign to keep Marcos from continuing his 20-year rule. It includes boycotts of companies associated with Marcos and his friends, strikes and school walkouts.

The government has provided no details of Marcos' inauguration plans, although government sources have said it might be in his Malacanang Palace. Inaugurations traditionally are gala outdoor affairs attended by tens of thousands of people.

Vice President George Bush attended Marcos' 1981 inaugural and praised the Philippine leader for his "adherence to democratic principles." Allan Croghan, U.S. Embassy spokesman, said he was not aware of any decision on U.S. plans for next week's inauguration.

Truly named new shuttle chief

WASHINGTON — Two-time space flier Richard H. Truly took over as boss of the embattled shuttle program Thursday, saying "We've overcome very difficult times before," and promising that the cause of the Challenger tragedy will be found and fixed.

Truly's appointment, by acting NASA Administrator William Graham, comes at a time when shuttle flights have been grounded pending the outcome of the investigation into the Jan. 28 explosion and destruction of Challenger and its crew of seven.

He relieves shuttle boss Jesse W. Moore, who had the final word on all launch decisions — including Challenger's — and who heads NASA's director of the Johnson Space Center in Houston, home base for astronauts-in-training and site of Mission Control.

At a news conference, Graham was asked about infighting and low morale at the agency and his own status as acting administrator. He said he finds morale high among NASA's 22,000 employees. As for his own future, he said he is prepared to do whatever the White House asks.

But another top NASA official, agreeing to discuss the situation on grounds he not be identified, said "The White

House scenario now is to bring in a white knight soon, because that worked so well at the Environmental Protection Agency when they brought Bill Ruckelshaus back" following allegations of mismanagement at the EPA.

Speculation about a NASA administrator has focused on James C. Fletcher, who headed the agency from 1971 to 1979, and on Thomas O. Paine, who guided NASA to its first landings on the moon, between 1968 and 1970.

Soviets launch space station; joins space lab in orbit

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union sent up a space station named Peace on Thursday to serve as a permanently manned base for the next generation in space. It has docking ports for six spacecraft and private cabins for cosmonauts.

It was launched without a crew and will not be manned until tests are completed, the official Tass news agency said, without revealing how long the test program would take.

The new station — named Mir, the

Meanwhile, the presidential commission investigating the accident has split into three working groups and awaited material it has requested by Friday from NASA and from rocket booster maker Morton Thiokol.

The commission has demanded all "documents, memoranda or personal notes," from all who took part in the heated discussions and disagreements over whether Challenger should be launched after the coldest pre-launch night in shuttle history.

Russian word for "peace" — joins the Salyut-7 space lab in orbit. The last team to work aboard the Salyut-7, which was launched in 1982, returned to Earth in November when one of the three cosmonauts fell ill.

Tass said both the Mir and the Salyut-u were functioning normally.

Up to six spacecraft at a time can dock at the Mir to deliver cosmonauts and supplies, Tass said, and it also is equipped to accommodate "modules" for work on special projects.

In Brief

Portion of Beatrice hearing closed

BEATRICE — Gage County Judge Steven Timm on Thursday closed a portion of preliminary hearing for one of two men accused of murdering three people in a Beatrice house last month.

Timm denied a defense motion to close the entire hearing for Kenneth Lee Johnson, 27, but over objections from the media sealed a statement Johnson made to investigators the night after the killings.

Johnson, and David Harold Jacob, 25, are charged with the first-degree murder in the shotgun slayings of Lisa Barrett, 18, Jerry Kechley, 22, and Bennett L. Bartram, 21.

Timm agreed to close the portion of the hearing where Johnson's statement was to be entered as evidence. He said releasing the statement to the public could irreparably harm Johnson's ability to get a fair trial.

Kerrey prefers cuts to tax increase

LINCOLN — Gov. Bob Kerrey said Thursday that if the state's projected tax revenues show a decline, he would rather cut the state's budget than see tax rates go up.

Kerrey stopped short of threatening to veto any tax rate increases that might be considered by the Legislature. He commented just hours before an advisory board was to meet and offer its advice on whether the revenue picture would improve or decline.

Kerrey said he believed a 3 percent budget reserve could adequately protect the state from potential cash flow problems.

Texaco bond cut to \$1 billion

NEW YORK — Texaco Inc. need not post a \$12 billion bond required under Texas court rules before it can appeal the Pennzoil Co.'s record-setting damage suit against it, a federal appeals court ruled Thursday.

A three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld an injunction issued by federal District Judge Charles Brieant Jr. of White Plains, N.Y., who said last December that the bond requirement effectively denies Texaco its right to appeal.

Brieant required Texaco to post only \$1 billion, a requirement the company was able to satisfy by pledging stock in its Canadian subsidiary. Separately, a Texas judge refused on Thursday to grant Texaco a new trial.

Coke says it may buy Dr Pepper

NEW YORK — Coca-Cola Co., the nation's largest soft-drink company, announced Thursday it had reached a preliminary agreement to buy No. 4 Dr Pepper Co. for \$470 million.

In a statement from its Atlanta headquarters, Coca-Cola said the agreement to buy Dr Pepper from its owners, the investment firm of Forstmann Little & Co. and senior company executives, included the repayment of \$170 million in debt owed by Dr Pepper.

The purchase is subject to the approval of the federal government and the Coca-Cola board of directors.

Years lost from birth defects down

ATLANTA — Americans with birth defects are living longer than they did a decade ago, but birth defects remain a leading cause of early death in the United States, health researchers said Thursday.

Researchers at the national Centers for Disease Control reported that their statistical measurement of premature death — years of "potential life" lost — fell 16 percent between 1970-72 and 1980-82, the latest period for which complete figures were available.

In 1970-72, birth defects robbed Americans of 869,000 years of life that they would have had if everyone had lived to be 65. Ten years later, the total was 733,000 years.

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U.S. schools get better report cards

Nebraska ranks second in graduates

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary William Bennett gave the states a report card Thursday on test scores, dropout rates and other measures that he cited as proof America's schools are on the rebound.

He said rising college entrance test scores, and slightly lower school dropout rates, show that "the excellence movement has clearly helped our poor and minority populations."

In releasing the Education Department's third annual chart of state education rankings, Bennett was following a tradition that his predecessor, T.H. Bell, started to the dismay of some state school superintendents.

Most of the data on the chart, including scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Testing Program exam, has been released previously.

The chart indicated the District of Columbia, Louisiana and Alabama have the worst dropout rates, while Minnesota, Nebraska and North Dakota have the best graduation rates.

The chart shows a 1984 graduation

rate in the nation's capital of only 55 percent.

The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduating seniors by the number of freshmen

in Minnesota, 89.3 percent, and Nebraska and North Dakota, both 86.3 percent.

New Hampshire, Oregon and Vermont led in SAT scores in the 22

Georgia, while Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and West Virginia pulled up at the rear on ACT scores.

The chart showed improvements in college admission scores in 35 states since 1982.

Bennett said Iowa, New Hampshire and Wisconsin had the best SAT or ACT scores. But he also commended the District of Columbia, South Carolina, Utah, Alabama and Kentucky for registering "the greatest test score improvement since 1982."

He lauded New Hampshire, Vermont, Nebraska and Iowa as states with average expenditures but above-average test scores. And he described Illinois, South Dakota, California, Delaware, Maine and Virginia as states with large concentrations of poor students and above-average scores.

Criticism of the chart rolled in, as it has in the past two years.

Howard Carroll, a spokesman for the National Education Association said, "Everybody wants to know the score, but this is an incomplete scorecard. Tests are not a true evaluator of achievement." The percentage of seniors taking the SAT or ACT varies widely from state to state, he said.

John Weiss, executive director of FairTest, a Boston-based group that is critical of standardized tests, said the chart "violates professional guidelines for proper test use and warps school curricula."

1984 High School Graduation Rate



four years earlier. It does not include those who obtain high school equivalency diplomas.

The national high school graduation rate was 70.9 percent in 1984, up from 69.7 in 1982. The best rates were

states where more students take that test; Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota set the pace in the 28 states where the ACT is dominant.

At the back of the SAT pack were South Carolina, North Carolina and