

News in a Minute



Brazil discovers gold strike

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil — Brazil has announced the discovery of its richest gold strike ever — a mine in the eastern Amazon containing at least 150 tons of the precious metal.

The state mining company Vale do Rio Doce discovered the underground mine in Curionopolis, 1,860 miles northeast of Rio in the jungle state of Para, Mining and Energy Minister Raimundo Brito said Thursday.

He estimated the mine holds \$1.6 billion in gold. The reserve is expected to boost Brazil's annual gold output by 25 percent when mining begins in three years, Brito said.

Brazil ranks sixth among the world's largest gold producers behind South Africa, Russia, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Pet iguana blamed for baby's death

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — A 3-week-old boy died of salmonella poisoning that was probably contracted from the family's pet iguana, and health officials Thursday warned that other reptile owners could be at risk.

"I do not know why (pet stores) sell these things," said Diane Jones, Fulton County health nurse. "The least they could do is inform people about this."

To prevent salmonella contamination, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention recommends washing your hands after handling the reptile and keeping reptiles away from areas where food is prepared.

Sport gives Johnson healthy outlook

LOS ANGELES — Magic Johnson pumped new life into basketball when he returned to the court this week after 4 1/2 years. AIDS experts say basketball may return the favor, helping the HIV-infected athlete stay healthy longer.

The benefits, doctors say, are both physical and psychological: The workouts will help his body, and the purple-and-gold Lakers jersey is certain to help his mind.

Exercise helps preserve lean muscle mass — important in HIV-infected people, who gradually accumulate fat and water and lose lean muscle as the disease progresses, said Dr. Gary Cohan, a specialist with Pacific Oaks Medical Group in Beverly Hills, the nation's largest AIDS practice.

Massive airport not in phone book

DENVER — Through a series of unforeseen events, the only Denver International Airport listed in the Denver-area white pages is not the \$5 million facility but a small "airport" for model airplanes built by a Commerce City man.

Four years ago, Commerce City asbestos-removal contractor John Palombo registered the trade name "Denver International Airport," turned a field at his nearby farm into a model plane and helicopter airport, and got a phone number for the facility.

"About 99.9 percent of my calls are for big DIA," Palombo said.

Lee Marable, DIA chief attorney, said the city was working to have the calls transferred to the new Denver airport.

"Somebody blew it, and we've got to fix it, if only as a public service," he said.

Train hauling chemicals jumps tracks; two die

CAJONSUMMIT, Calif. — A train hauling hazardous chemicals jumped the tracks on a steep hill Thursday and exploded in flames, killing two crew members, injuring 20 others and spewing toxic smoke into the sky.

"I felt a boom ... We had an earthquake yesterday, and I thought it was another earthquake aftershock," said Ron Beth, who was jolted awake in his motel room a few hundred feet away. "I look out and see this big gray-colored column of smoke."

Most of the injured were police officers and transportation officials who complained of chest pains, shortness of breath and skin rashes. They were taken to several hospitals.

Two of the three crew members were killed, but the engineer escaped with lacerations and an injured back after Patrick Davis, who lives nearby, pulled him through the window of an overturned locomotive.

"I couldn't see anybody else and one engine was on fire and the other

engine blew up," Davis said.

All four of the train's locomotives and 46 of its 49 cars left the tracks shortly after 4 a.m., said Mike Martin, a spokesman for Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Corp. Five tank cars contained hazardous chemicals, he said.

The fire was still burning intensely at midday. Flames were shooting 30 feet into the air and thick gray-black plumes of smoke billowed into the air.

"It's really ripping, really burning," said Bill Peters, California Department of Forestry spokesman. "We're not fighting it as of yet because of all the chemicals."

The site, in the Cajon Pass, is a sparsely populated area about 15 miles north of San Bernardino. A hotel, a restaurant and a gas station were evacuated along with a few homes. Nearby Interstate 15, the main artery between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, was shut down in both directions.

The cause of the crash was uncertain.

"I felt a boom ... We had an earthquake yesterday, and I thought it was another earthquake aftershock."

RON BETH

Guest at nearby motel

Emergency crews identified the hazardous materials on the train as trimethyl phosphite, methyl ethyl ketone, butyl acrylate, denatured alcohol and petroleum distillates.

All are highly flammable and their fumes can burn skin or irritate eyes, noses and throats if inhaled, Peters said.

"They're not real deadly, but they are real uncomfortable," he said.

Forbes hints at rejecting federal funds

WASHINGTON — Multimillionaire Steve Forbes hinted Thursday he might continue to finance his own campaign with unlimited spending if he wins the GOP nomination. Already, by largely paying his own way in the primary race, Forbes is avoiding the state-by-state spending caps that constrain most of his GOP foes.

By law, the Republican and Democratic nominees are guaranteed \$60 million each from the taxpayers for the general election campaign if they agree to forgo fund-raising and spend no more than that amount.

But Forbes indicated Thursday that if President Clinton would agree to give up federal financing, he would too. Even if Clinton balks, Forbes left open the possibility he might unilaterally pass up federal financing.

"I'm going to make a challenge to the Democrats, when I win, not to take taxpayer's money," Forbes said in a statement to The Associated Press.

No major-party candidate has given up federal financing for the general election since the current system was set up in 1974.

Running as an independent in 1992, Ross Perot bankrolled his campaign with more than \$60 million of his own money. Clinton and Bush abided by the spending limits and accepted federal financing.

If Forbes went outside the current campaign financing system, he could accept up to \$1,000 from each donor, and augment that with unlimited amounts from his own fortune — estimated at \$440 million.

Clinton, already indebted with personal legal bills from Whitewater, has no personal wealth to tap. His campaign immediately scoffed at Forbes' proposal.

"The president thinks we have a lot further to go, and wants ... to move away from the current system, not back to the days when donors making large individual contributions had a disproportionate impact on the process," Lewis added.

"Steve Forbes seems intent on buying the election, and according to the FEC law, there's nothing to prevent him from doing it," said Dan McLagan, a spokesman for Lamar Alexander. "But the depth of one's thoughts and one's ideas are more important than the depth of one's wallet."

U.N. official will oversee grave dig

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A U.N. investigator surveyed human bones — some with flesh and clothing still on them — in a muddy field where thousands of people may be buried, and prepared Thursday to supervise the excavation of another mass grave.

The dig — which would be the first one supervised by the United Nations — could stir desire for revenge and complicate moves toward reconciliation after nearly four years of war.

And it could prove politically problematic as investigators provide more ghastly evidence for an international war crimes tribunal. But unearthing corpses could also answer the burning questions of relatives over the fates of tens of thousands of people missing in Bosnia's war.

Meanwhile Thursday, two U.S. soldiers were wounded by a land mine in Hadizici, 10 miles southeast of the American base in Tuzla. One suffered a shrapnel wound to the leg and the other was injured in the right foot, the military said.

They were taken to a U.S. military hospital, where they were listed in stable condition. Their names were not immediately released.

Investigator Manfred Nowak visited a ghoulish field near the town of Glogova in eastern Bosnia, where Muslim authorities fear thousands of missing residents of Srebrenica, an enclave overrun by Serb rebels last July, may be buried.

"We will dig out the mass graves with our bare hands, and carry our beloved in bags back home."

Shouted by one of 2,000 protesters in Tuzla

Bones protruded from the snow and mud. One human leg still wore what appeared to be pajamas. A few boots and scraps of clothing lay nearby.

On Thursday, more than 2,000 women gathered outside local government offices in Tuzla, demanding to see President Alija Izetbegovic and threatening a march down the "road of death," 40 miles southeast to Srebrenica through Serb-held territory.

"We will dig out the mass graves with our bare hands, and carry our beloved in bags back home," one of the demonstrators shouted through a megaphone.

The first excavation will begin Friday, when Nowak will travel to the area around Jajce in northwestern Bosnia, where three graves containing 46 bodies were recently found.

He said the victims apparently ranged in age from 11 to 70 and were mostly Croats and Muslims. It was unclear when the killings took place, but Serbs took the area in October 1992. Bosnian Croats regained it last September.

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