

News Digest

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1997

World marks AIDS Day

■ Activists in European and Asian countries focused on the epidemic.

PARIS (AP) — AIDS activists around the world marched, prayed and wore red ribbons Monday to mark the ninth World AIDS Day — while AIDS victims in poor nations did what they did every day: lived, struggled and died in obscurity.

On Monday, at least, their lives were honored.

In Europe, demonstrators observed the day with candlelight marches and songs. In Asia, governments announced new education and health programs aimed at fighting their growing AIDS problems.

Thousands marched in Paris at sundown, blowing whistles and carrying placards demanding more help for victims. Rallies were also held in other French cities.

"They are dying less in France, in the rich countries, but they continue to die more and more in the poor countries," said French Health Minister Bernard Kouchner.

Kouchner announced a plan to require that French doctors report the number of patients who test positive for the AIDS virus, though the names would remain confidential. "If we knew, in epidemiological terms, the number of HIV-positive people, this would vastly help us" fight AIDS, he said.

One in every 100 sexually active people age 15 to 49 worldwide has HIV, and among those infected, only one in 10 knows it, according to UNAIDS and the World Health Organization.

Figures released last week show doctors had underestimated the size of the epidemic by 30 percent: 30 million people now are infected with HIV and 16,000 more people are infected daily. Of the 2.3 million people expected to die this year of AIDS, 460,000 are children under 15.

Paradox plagues attorney

Unabomber defender plugs death penalty to jurors

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — As the fourth week of jury selection began in the Unabomber trial, a lawyer for Theodore Kaczynski was caught in a legal contradiction: trying to persuade prospects to consider the death penalty.

Defense attorney Judy Clarke wants to keep opponents of capital punishment, but they must at least consider it to be eligible for the panel. So Clarke pressed her efforts Monday to talk death-penalty opponents into looking at both sides of the issue.

The candidate who provided Clarke with her greatest challenge yet was a white-bearded man who said his work against abortion had solidified his anti-death penalty views.

"Looking at my beliefs, I don't believe today I could sign a verdict of death," the man told Clarke.

In a slow, methodical line of questioning, Clarke suggested it was important to have differing viewpoints represented on a jury.

"I agree," the man said. The defense attorney pressed further.

"If you consider a crime so horrible — the intentional murder of a

"(AIDS victims) continue to die more and more in the poor countries."

BERNARD KOUCHNER
French health minister

This year's World AIDS day emphasized the plight of HIV-infected children.

Elsewhere in Europe, 12 Athens radio stations broadcast an hour-long program on AIDS. Greek state-run television stations aired documentaries on AIDS, a Freddie Mercury concert — the singer died of AIDS — and a ballet dedicated to the fight against AIDS.

In Helsinki, Finland, lawmakers lighted candles on the steps of Parliament. Some 50 artists performed a free concert in Turku, Finland's former capital on the west coast, with the proceeds going to AIDS support centers.

The World Health Organization said new HIV infections in Western Europe have dropped 10 percent.

While new drug therapies and increased education has slowed the spread of HIV in many industrialized countries, AIDS infection has accelerated in developing countries, where victims and governments cannot afford the costly treatments.

More than 90 percent of HIV-infected people live in the developing world, and the disease is spreading at an alarming rate in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the WHO's regional director for Europe said Monday.

"Eastern Europe is now in the forefront of the AIDS epidemic," Jo E. Asyall said, attributing the increase primarily to intravenous drug use.

In St. Petersburg, Russia, teenage actors dressed as prostitutes and drug addicts, drawing laughter as they did a skit demonstrating the menace of AIDS. But the perfor-

mance was followed by a serious message.

"I understand that young people are our future, but who will work with prostitutes, who will work with drug addicts, who will work with homosexuals?" AIDS activist Nikolai Panchenkov asked the audience. "No one."

Across Asia, where international health authorities say they believe the number of AIDS and HIV infections is underreported, World AIDS Day was observed with new awareness programs from China to India.

In Bombay, demonstrators carried a wooden effigy of a snake strangling India through the streets.

China said it plans to start broadcasting anti-AIDS messages on trains.

In Tokyo, hundreds gathered in a rainswept square to sing songs and appeal for support and understanding for AIDS victims. A huge tree was set up in the square, illuminated with electric lights and covered with some 17,000 red ribbons sent in from around Japan.

However, Thailand's economic problems prompted the government to slash funds for a program that bought condoms for prostitutes, and sharply reduced World AIDS day observances in Bangkok.

Outside Nairobi, Kenya, workers at a home for AIDS-infected children went about their usual job Monday — trying to prolong and ease the lives of 50 largely abandoned youngsters.

"The children look at me," said program director Protus Lumiti. "If I am strong, they will be strong. But if I am brooding, they will too."

"Looking at my beliefs, I don't believe today I could sign a verdict of death."

prospective Unabomber juror

child, for instance — and if the person had done it before and had been released, and you were persuaded by fellow jurors that without a sentence of death the person would be released again, would you be inclined to change your position?"

The man paused for a long time before speaking.

"One side of me says I still could not find for the death penalty," he said. "But it depends on the circumstances. There's a requirement for looking out for society's best interests. I might find in these circumstances — I might have to do that."

Kaczynski is charged in the mail-bombing deaths of two men and the maiming of two others. If convicted in the last of the bombings — the only one to occur after the federal death penalty was reinstated — he could face execution.

"The great irony is she has to

take the people with the strongest conviction against putting this man to death and try to pull them the other way," said Laurie Levenson, associate dean of Loyola University Law School in Los Angeles.

"But she hopes they will later spring back like rubber bands," Levenson said. "What she has to do is a temporary conversion."

Monday's session recessed for the day with a total of 54 prospects in the pool of tentative jurors. The judge wants to clear 64 prospects from which lawyers will select the final 12 jurors and six alternates.

Kaczynski, who had been absent from last week's final session after reacting negatively to discussions of his mental state, returned to court Monday. He sat silent and motionless as the day began, but later chatted amiably with his lawyers and took notes during jury questioning.

Judge warns girls to play fair ... or else

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. (AP) — Stepping into a hair-pulling, name-calling dispute that went from the schoolhouse to the courthouse, a judge Monday ordered two 10-year-old girls to play nice or risk going to jail.

"If one of you looks cross-eyed to the other, you're going to come back here," Circuit Judge Michael Schwartz warned fifth-grade classmates Kytan Schultz and Cassandra Reibel in an after-school hearing.

"No more harassment, no more threats, no more obscenities or vulgar names, no more pulling hair, no more threats to the family, no more threatening calls to each other or relatives," he said. "If one of you causes problems to the other, I'm going to put you in the juvenile hold."

Schwartz, who didn't specify how long he could confine them, cracked down on both girls during a hearing in which he was asked to lift another judge's personal protection order issued Nov. 21 on behalf of Kytan.

The girls only nodded during the stern lecture and stuck close to their parents as they left court.

The fact that the case was in court at all caused a furor in this Detroit suburb. A prosecutor called it an abuse of the court system, and educators say it could subvert their efforts to teach children how to get along.

"Where did we get this idea that every dispute between children has to wind up before a circuit court judge?" asked prosecutor Carl Marlinga, who was not involved in the case. "I think it's a ridiculous waste of time."

Kytan's mother, Deborah Schultz, said her request for the original order was a matter of taking care of her child after a year of abuse.

"When your children are hurting, isn't it the parent's responsibility to see to the protection?" Deborah Schultz said. "I'm sick of it and I'm not going to take it anymore."

Under the original order, the

girls couldn't be on the same piece of property together — meaning Cassandra could have been in violation simply by going to school. Cassandra stayed home from school last week for fear of being arrested, but she showed up Monday. Kytan was in school last week but stayed home Monday.

The new order to behave applies to both girls and allows them to remain in the same classroom "in sight of each other."

Cassandra's attorney, Michael Dennis, said the ruling was "definitely a solution."

"I think he was trying to send a message to each of them and say that you two are going to have to get along," Dennis said.

In a 1996 case in Boston, a 3-year-old girl's mother obtained a restraining order against a 3-year-old boy whom she claimed kicked her daughter in the head while playing. A judge ordered that the mothers keep the children supervised and separated while at the playground.

At Miller Elementary School, where Cassandra and Kytan are in the same classroom, educators say a court order is unnecessary and potentially harmful.

"The public needs to trust us," said Assistant Superintendent Karl Klimek. "We're not trying to hurt either child. We're trying to resolve this so that it becomes a positive learning experience."

To Marlinga, the prosecutor, the case shows that the laws governing personal protection orders need to be changed. As it stands, a personal protection order can be filed against virtually anyone without any sort of a previous relationship.

"You could get it against the pope," Marlinga said, adding that hundreds of orders pour into the court system every week and 90 percent are issued without much screening. "Everything else would come to a screeching halt if judges had to evaluate every one of these."

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