

News Digest

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Starr report accuses Clinton of lying

WASHINGTON (AP) — Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's referral to Congress accuses President Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice and provides a damaging portrayal of his contacts with Monica Lewinsky and Oval Office secretary Betty Currie, legal sources say.

Starr's report accuses Clinton of lying in portions of his Aug. 17 grand jury testimony as well as his Jan. 17 sworn testimony in the Paula Jones lawsuit, the sources said, speaking only on condition of anonymity.

The referral Starr sent on Wednesday lays out detailed evidence that prosecutors contend shows Clinton committed perjury, obstruction of justice, witness tampering and abuse of power, the sources said.

"The report is a straight narra-

tive" and it alleges that "the president continued to lie and lie and lie," one source said.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart declined comment Thursday except to refer to Clinton lawyer David Kendall's statement Wednesday. Kendall said the report represents "only the prosecutors' allegations" and "there is no basis for impeachment."

The report, which lawmakers expect to make public Friday, will cite specific contacts the president had with Currie last December and January and with Lewinsky in July 1997 — both during critical periods in the Jones lawsuit — as evidence of efforts to thwart the litigation, the sources said.

The report details what prosecutors assert was a pattern of lying by Clinton

and an effort to sustain such lies by using government employees and resources after Starr's criminal investigation expanded to the Lewinsky matter in January. The evidence ranges from a false statement Clinton approved for his press secretary to put out on the morning the Lewinsky story broke Jan. 21 to the legal battles he allowed his aides to fight to block access to witnesses, the sources said.

It will detail Clinton summoning Currie to the Oval Office the day after he gave his sworn deposition in the Jones case last January, testimony in which he denied sexual relations with Lewinsky and said she visited the White House frequently to see Currie.

The White House originally dismissed the Currie meeting as an

effort by the president to "refresh his recollection" about Lewinsky's visits. But now that the president has admitted he did have a sexual relationship with Lewinsky, prosecutors portray the meeting as part of an effort to influence Currie as a potential witness, the sources said.

Starr's report also points to a nighttime Oval Office meeting on July 14, 1997, between Clinton and Lewinsky as an early event in a months-long pattern of trying to derail the Jones sexual harassment lawsuit, the sources said.

The meeting occurred around the time there were growing signs that Jones' lawyers were about to expand their case to other women, including former White House volunteer Kathleen Willey.



Dow closes 249.48 lower, wipes out record gains

NEW YORK (AP) — The Dow Jones industrials fell as much as 345 points Thursday as the glimmer of hope that energized the stock market just days ago was swept away by another wave of anxiety over the crises in Washington and the global economy.

Bargain hunters moved in just as the market neared the low point of last week's plunge, providing a late bounce. The Dow Jones industrial average finished 249.48 points lower at 7,615.54, more than 1,700 points, or 18.4 percent, below the July 17 record of 9,337.97.

The drop, combined with Wednesday's 155-point loss, more than wiped out the record 380 points that the Dow gained Tuesday amid hopes the Federal Reserve may intervene in the battle against economic distress spreading around the world.

It was the fifth time in just 10 sessions that the Dow has whipsawed more than 300 points in a day, including the 512-point plunge on Aug. 31.

Kosovo refugees flee Serbs, leave 25 new ghost towns

ISTINIC, Yugoslavia (AP) — About 25,000 people crowded into this village in southwestern Kosovo on Thursday, terrified they would be caught in a pincer strike by Serb troops and tanks blasting their tiny towns.

Village elders said at least five people, including two infants, had died Wednesday of sickness or wounds suffered while fleeing.

The refugees were the latest victims of the crackdown on ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province. They fled on tractors and wagons heaped with belongings, clogging a dirt road Wednesday in a column 7 miles long, according to Western observers who visited the area.

Fernando del Mundo, a U.N. refugee agency spokesman, said the situation threatens to create as many as 25 new ghost towns in Kosovo, where dozens of villages already have been charred and emptied in the face of shelling or clashes between Serb security forces and ethnic Albanian rebels.

Study: College students' binge drinking unchanged

BOSTON (AP) — More than half the nation's college students who drank last year did so intending to get drunk, but the number of binge drinkers was virtually unchanged from four years ago, according to research released Thursday.

The survey of 14,521 students by the Harvard School of Public Health followed up on an analysis of 15,103 students in 1993. Both surveys queried students randomly at 130 colleges across the country.

The report published in this month's issue of the Journal of American College Health shows that more students who consumed alcohol did so to get drunk — 39 percent in 1993 compared with 52 percent in 1997.

The number of students who were drunk three or more times in the month prior to answering the survey jumped by 22 percent.

In both reports, fraternity and sorority members were the biggest alcohol guzzlers.

Yeltsin nominates another candidate

MOSCOW (AP) — Bowing to bitter opposition from parliament, President Boris Yeltsin nominated former spy chief Yevgeny Primakov Thursday as prime minister to head emergency efforts to stem the country's economic crisis.

Yeltsin proposed Primakov, Russia's foreign minister, after his first choice, Viktor Chernomyrdin, asked not to be nominated for a third time. Leaders on all sides had warned of a political explosion if Yeltsin again chose Chernomyrdin.

"In view of the repeated rejection of (Chernomyrdin) ... I ask the State Duma to confirm the appointment of Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov as chairman of the government," Yeltsin said in a brief letter.

Opposition and pro-government political leaders promptly welcomed Primakov's nomination, predicting the Communist-dominated lower chamber of parliament, the Duma, would approve him. A White House official also praised Primakov.

A confirmation vote could come as early as today.

"I think he will get the Duma's support. Common sense has prevailed," said Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, who led the opposition to Chernomyrdin. Primakov is "known in the country

and in the world and can carry out policies defending the interests of the nation."

Chernomyrdin, meanwhile, said lawmakers' refusal to confirm him was part of a Communist plot to force Yeltsin to resign and seize power. "It's a creeping coup."

In a televised address, Chernomyrdin reproached Yeltsin for making concessions, urging him: "Show will!"

The only opposition to Primakov came from nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the Liberal Democratic Party, who denounced Primakov as an American puppet.

As foreign minister, Primakov was widely seen as a nationalist, working to restore some of the international status Moscow lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

He briefly was first deputy director of the KGB, the main Soviet security organization, and later headed a KGB successor, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service.

In Washington Thursday, White House press secretary Mike McCurry said, "The United States government knows and respects Foreign Minister Primakov. ... We would expect to have a good and close working relationship with Prime Minister Primakov."

Sinn Fein, Ulster relations looking up

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — Setting aside years of mistrust and suspicion, the Protestant leader of Northern Ireland's new proposed government and his nemesis in the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party talked in depth for the first time Thursday.

Protestant leader David Trimble and Gerry Adams, head of the Sinn Fein, met privately for 45 minutes to discuss Northern Ireland's new government, established in April's historic peace accord.

The leaders came away from their encounter sounding hopeful that their fundamental differences could be narrowed.

"We are now dealing with the crisis in the way it should be dealt with: by direct dialogue," Adams said after meeting with Trimble, first minister of the new Northern Ireland Assembly.

Trimble has refused to speak to Sinn Fein since he was elected in 1995 to head the Ulster Unionists, Northern Ireland's main Protestant party, because the Irish Republican Army had not disarmed.

But Trimble talked briefly with Adams on Monday, when all party leaders who support the peace agreement met to discuss how Protestants and Catholics should jointly govern Northern Ireland.

Trimble said he wasn't seeking to publicly shame the IRA-Sinn Fein movement by demanding disarmament, but that eliminating private armies was an inevitable consequence of April's agreement.

Adams expects his party to hold positions in an administration that will oversee the Assembly.

So far, the Assembly has approved only Trimble in the top post and moderate Catholic politician Seamus Mallon as his deputy. The 108-member Assembly is scheduled to reconvene next week to debate which parties should hold what posts and how many should be created.

The accord specifies that the IRA should disarm under international supervision by mid-2000. Trimble insisted Thursday that most Protestant members of the Assembly would veto Sinn

"He's a man who I can do business with. He's a man I have to do business with. We had to find ways for him to help me and me to help him."

GERRY ADAMS
Sinn Fein leader

Fein's right to hold top posts if the IRA refused to start disarming.

Considering their long track record of verbally sparring through the media, Thursday's comments by Trimble and Adams appeared surprisingly conciliatory.

"He's a man who I can do business with. He's a man I have to do business with," Adams said. "We had to find ways for him to help me and me to help him."

In one important pledge, Trimble said he expected Northern Ireland's new administration to meet formally with the Irish government by early October.

Formal policy coordination between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic was an essential part of the agreement for Catholics who seek Ireland's eventual unification.

Also Thursday, Northern Ireland's police commander announced that his forces would no longer require backup from British soldiers in Belfast, although the army will remain active in the most hard-line Catholic areas of rural Northern Ireland.

Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan said his announcement would eventually affect troop strengths in Northern Ireland, which currently stand at about 17,000.

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