

News Digest

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News Briefs



Jon Christensen marries in Alabama

MOBILE, Ala. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Jon Christensen and former Miss America Tara Dawn Holland married Saturday in a candlelit wedding ceremony described as moving and tearful by guests.

The bride, a Mobile native, serenaded the groom with "You Are My Treasure," then began to cry.

The bride's aunt, Jeanne Train of Daphne, called the service beautiful and "authentic."

"I think the whole church started crying when she started crying," said Train of her niece.

The couple spoke to each other during the ceremony about why they loved one another.

"You could tell they really love each other. You could feel it," said Cindy Dore of Lafayette, La., whose teen-age son was a congressional page and got to know Christensen. She said Christensen spoke to his bride about the first time he saw her, running through an airport on Valentine's Day, 1997.

The wedding at the Ashland Place United Methodist Church did not include groomsmen or bridesmaids. The marriage is Holland's first, Christensen's second.

"I've promised her that I will show up on time," Christensen said before the ceremony. "Wherever she wants me to stand, I'll stand. I will behave."

After the ceremony, the couple hugged guests and thanked them for attending as they made their way down the aisle.

Following a two-week honeymoon at an undisclosed location, the couple will live in Omaha, where Christensen will work at Financial Continuum, a firm that assists estate-planning attorneys.

"I'm closing the door on this part of my life, and I am anxious and looking forward to the next phase," said Christensen when announcing his job at the firm. The U.S. representative finished third of three candidates in the Nebraska GOP primary for governor.

Christensen will serve as a lobbyist on both federal and state levels and help the company expand into other legal areas.

But he hasn't ruled out a return to politics.

"I'm 35 and plan to live to be at least 80," he has said. "There is a very strong possibility I'll be back in politics someday."

Leader of Russia's Democratic Choice party killed

MOSCOW (AP) — In modern Russia, the crime was so common as to be mundane. Two thugs, armed with machine pistols and silencers, stalked and killed a powerful figure, then slipped away into the night. Police vowed to catch them, and politicians expressed outrage.

Usually, that would be the end of the story.

This time, though, the person shot was one of the most prominent and popular women in Russian politics, a prospective presidential candidate with friends in the highest reaches of the Kremlin.

As outrage mounted Sunday, it seemed clear that the killing of Galina Starovoitova was not going to be treated as a routine crime, and some said it might turn out to be a watershed in Russian politics.

"This is impossible to tolerate any longer," said Grigory Yavlinsky, the leader of Yabloko, a reform-oriented party. "We must stop feeling powerless before the increasingly brazen scum. We cannot go on living as though everything is running as usual."

Starovoitova, a member of parliament and a leader of the liberal Russia's Democratic Choice party, was walking up the stairs of her apartment building in St. Petersburg with a young aide Friday evening. A pair of assailants — police believe it was a man and a woman — appeared behind them and opened fire.

Starovoitova, shot three times in the head, collapsed and died instantly, authorities said. The aide, 27-year-old Ruslan Linkov, was critically wounded but managed to telephone a news agency reporter before losing consciousness.

Police have recovered two guns and are hoping that Linkov can provide a description of the killers. He had regained consciousness but still could not speak Sunday.

Riots erupt in Indonesia; youths attack Christians

Six people killed; troops fight back with tear gas

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Mobs of Muslim youths set fire to churches and attacked Christians in the capital Sunday in an eruption of ethnic and religious violence that killed six people.

Some victims were mutilated and one was paraded in the streets by his killers. Troops desperate to restore order fired shots and volleys of tear gas to break up rock-throwing crowds that officials said had burned four churches and ransacked seven others.

The violence comes as Indonesia grapples with its worst economic crisis in 30 years. Millions of people now live in poverty as inflation and unemployment rates soar.

President B.J. Habibie is at the center of student protests over his plans to change Indonesia's political system, which opponents say fall short of introducing true democracy.

Riots broke out less than half a mile from the presidential palace Sunday, a little more than a week after clashes between students and security personnel also triggered rioting. As many as 17 people died during the earlier clashes. The last died Sunday at a hospital.

Dozens were reported injured in the new clashes Sunday between the Muslim majority and Christians originally from the eastern city of Ambon.

Muslim residents said they retaliated after the Ambonese threw rocks at a mosque and smashed windows.

In one attack, Muslim mobs broke into a Roman Catholic church where a wedding was being held, shattering stained glass windows, chalices and a statue of the Virgin Mary. Pews and Bibles were tossed onto a bonfire.

"We got out as quickly as we could," said the bride, Threewaty, 27, who like many Indonesians goes by only one name. "We're still not married. But we're safe."

In the street outside the church, several hundred Muslim youths sat in the middle of a road and recited Islamic prayers. Some carried banners proclaiming themselves members of the "Front to Defend Islam."

At least four churches were burned and seven ransacked, officials said, adding that the damage toll could rise.

Mobs blocked fire trucks from reaching the burning Christian Church

of Ketapang.

Mobs threw rocks at an open-backed military truck carrying 20 Ambonese as it raced away, and boys poked sticks at the occupants through the vehicle's protective wire netting.

"Kill them," the rioters screamed.

Officials of the Indonesian Red Cross recovered five bodies of Ambonese who had been slashed with knives and broken bottles. The killers of one man cut off one of his ears and brandished it.

Assailants paraded a sixth body in a cart.

A gambling hall was also set afire, and a Catholic girls' school was ransacked and partly burned. Many Muslims accuse the Ambonese of involvement in illegal gambling.

The military said Muslims also targeted ethnic Chinese after hearing unsubstantiated rumors that the minority group had paid for attacks on them.

About 90 percent of Indonesia's 202 million people are Muslim, making it the world's most populous Islamic nation. However, religious tolerance is enshrined in the national philosophy.

Iraq says no more arms papers exist

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Iraq's foreign minister Sunday accused U.N. arms inspectors of "a savage campaign ... of disinformation" in their quest for more documents about the country's banned weapons.

The minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, said Iraq has already handed over millions of papers to monitors and claimed that no more files exist.

"Anything relevant to the work of disarmament, we had already handed over," he said, adding that Iraq has given 2,188,020 pages of documents to U.N. Special Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency monitors since weapons inspections began in 1991.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said some documents in question are long lost and accused Chief Weapons Inspector Richard Butler of trying to create a pretext to continue sanctions or allow the United States and Britain to attack.

Aziz told reporters that "Butler has asked for a series of alleged documents ... that do not exist."

"It is quite provocative if you want to dig in the whole archives of the government of Iraq, which might take decades," he said.

National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said the Iraqi comments were "insulting" and called for Iraqi cooperation.

"If we conclude Iraq does not intend to live up to its commitments and UNSCOM can't do its job, we remain prepared" to carry out the military attack President Clinton canceled last week, he said in a telephone interview from South Korea, where the president is concluding his trip to Asia.

The documents have emerged as a new flashpoint in the dispute between Iraq and the United Nations since Baghdad reversed its ban on weapons inspections and allowed monitors to return last week.

The decision averted military

"It is quite provocative if you want to dig in the whole archives of the government."

TARIQ AZIZ

Iraqi deputy prime minister

action, but forces remain in the Persian Gulf.

Aziz accused Butler of trying to block a comprehensive review that the U.N. Security Council has pledged to undertake once inspectors declare that Baghdad is in full compliance with their demands.

"He's either creating a superficial pretext to justify the American aggressions, or he is trying to confuse and undermine the comprehensive review," Aziz said.

The weapons inspectors must certify that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction before U.N. Security Council sanctions on the country can be lifted.

The sanctions, imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, ban the free export of oil and have devastated Iraq's economy. Iraq insists it has met the Security Council's requirements, but the inspectors charge it is still hiding information about its weapons.

Iraq had cut off dealings with the inspectors in August and October but rescinded both decisions Nov. 14, barely averting military strikes.

Despite mounting tension, the inspectors have been visiting suspected sites with no obstruction from Iraqi authorities.

They made their first surprise visit to a suspected arms-making facility Saturday.

Tourists take to septuplets' new house

■ About 6,000 in Carlisle, Iowa, celebrate 'miracle' of the world's first living set of septuplets.

CARLISLE, Iowa (AP) — About 6,000 people — nearly double the town's population — toured a 6,400-square-foot house Sunday that will be home to the McCaughey septuplets.

"It's curiosity, of course," said Joan Benscoter of Oskaloosa. "Plus, it's a celebration of the miracle that the whole seven lived."

A year ago on Nov. 19, Bobbi and Kenny McCaughey became parents of the world's first living set of septuplets. To help the Carlisle couple, scores of businesses and residents contributed materials, services, money and land to build them a new home.

The line of curiosity-seekers wrapped down five blocks for the housewarming. About 700 people per hour took the 10-minute tour of the seven-bedroom, 4½-bathroom, 15-closet house.

Most were from central Iowa, although some came from as far away as Ontario, Canada.

"This house is like a dream house," said 8-year-old Susie Goulette of Minneapolis, who visited with her grandmother.

The main floor houses the living room, dining room, study and family room, a spacious kitchen and a laundry room. The basement features a 648-square-foot play room, two bedrooms and space for a future laundry room.

The upstairs features five bedrooms ranging in size from 220-square feet to the 362-square-foot master bedroom and two bathrooms.

Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey only briefly stopped by the home they will move into Monday.

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