

NEWS DIGEST

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Radiation gas leak contained

OKAIMURA, Japan (AP) — An uncontrolled nuclear reaction at a uranium processing plant in northeastern Japan was contained early Friday (Thursday CDT), the regional governor said, hours after a leak of radioactive gas seriously injured three workers and possibly contaminated 34 others.

"The prefecture received confirmation at 6:15 a.m. that the chain reaction has been halted," said Gov. Masaru Hashimoto.

Hours earlier, more than 310,000 people within six miles of the plant were ordered to stay in their homes.

The facility, which refines uranium so it can be used to fuel nuclear reactors, is located in Tokaimura, a town of 33,000 people, 70 miles north-east of Tokyo.

Government officials said Thursday's accident spewed a gas containing alpha, beta and gamma radiation into the atmosphere, forcing the evacuation of 150 neighbors of the plant.

The plant was not designed to block the escape of radiation, company officials said.

Never before has a nuclear acci-

dent in Japan caused such serious injuries.

In Washington, President Clinton expressed deep concern and offered assistance. "This is going to be a very hard day for the people of Japan," he said.

Two of the three injured workers were in critical condition from the radiation, estimated at about 4,000 times the level considered safe for a person to receive in a year, said hospital official Yukio Kamakura.

A team was removing water from the cooling equipment around the tank early Friday in hopes that it would suppress further nuclear fission, Science and Technology Agency official Eiichiro Watanabe said.

Nuclear fission happens when neutrons hit uranium, causing atoms to split, releasing huge amounts of energy. It is the principle behind the atomic bomb. Water stimulates the neutrons, spurring along the reaction.

At least 34 workers, other than the injured, were being examined for possible contamination, said Junichi Takahashi, an official with JCO, the private company that runs the plant. JCO is owned by Sumitomo Metal

"This is something that Japan has never experienced."

HIROMU NONAKA
government spokesman

Mining Co., one of Japan's largest business groups.

Five residents were exposed to radiation, a local official said on condition of anonymity.

"This is something that Japan has never experienced," government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka said late Thursday. The radiation level outside the plant does not pose a significant threat unless the nuclear reaction were to continue for a long time, he added.

Radioactivity levels — at one point 10,000 times above normal at the plant — remained high several hours after the accident. Although no official government reading was released, Ibaraki state officials said radiation levels were about 10 times above normal 1 1/4 miles from the scene.

The three injured workers were

mixing uranium with nitric acid to make fuel when they suddenly saw a blue flash, JCO officials said. Plant officials believe they accidentally put too much uranium in the tank, setting off an uncontrolled nuclear reaction, which appeared to continue into Friday morning.

Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi acknowledged late Thursday that the government was slow in reacting to the accident, Kyodo News agency reported.

Hisashi Ouchi, 35, and 39-year-old Masato Shinohara were in a state of shock and had diarrhea, fever, a high white-blood-cell count and reddened skin — all symptoms of radiation sickness. The third injured worker, Yutaka Yokokawa, 54, was alert and able to walk.

World and Nation Datelines

Washington

Clintons to use mortgage to buy New York home

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton said Thursday that some of his friends declined to help him buy his \$1.7 million home in suburban New York because they didn't want to get "dragged around" and subjected to unwarranted allegations.

Lamenting the attitudes in Washington, Clinton said: "There's the rest of the world and the way it works and the way people view things. And then there's the way a lot of things around here work."

The president and his wife, Hillary, are to close the deal on their five-bedroom home in Chappaqua, N.Y., in early November. Originally, the Clintons said they would accept a loan guarantee from Terry McAuliffe, a friend and major fund-raiser for the president.

But the Clintons dropped that idea amid criticism of the deal and began pursuing a conventional mortgage, sources said.

Washington

Ten killed in earthquake near coast of Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A strong earthquake along the Pacific coast rattled much of Mexico on Thursday, killing at least 10 people and damaging hundreds of buildings.

The U.S. Geological Survey in Golden, Colo., said the magnitude-7.5 quake was centered between the Pacific resorts of Huatulco and Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca, 280 miles south of Mexico City.

Fifteen buildings were damaged in the city of 18,000 people, and one person was killed by falling debris. Huatulco's mayor reported only minor damage and "normal panic."

At least nine people died elsewhere in the state, according to the state government.

Washington

Neanderthal cannibalism debate may be solved

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a firelit cave in southern France 100,000 years ago, a group of hunters bent over their meal, expertly slicing flesh from carcasses and sucking marrow from the bones.

But a closer examination uncovers a grisly scene: These were Neanderthals, who butchered six fellow people — the first real proof, say scientists, that Neanderthals practiced cannibalism.

Whether some Neanderthals ate their own kind has been a controversy since the turn of the century, when Neanderthal bones bearing suspicious scars were discovered in Croatia.

A discovery by a team of French and American scientists used forensics techniques to examine the bones.

"This one site has all of the evidence right together. It's as if somebody put a yellow tape around the cave for 100,000 years and kept the scene intact," said co-investigator Tim White, a University of California, Berkeley, paleontologist.

Bush campaign fund at \$37 million

WASHINGTON (AP) — Continuing to financially overwhelm both Republicans and Democrats, GOP presidential front-runner George W. Bush reported raising more than \$56 million through the end of September, winding up with a campaign bank balance of \$37 million.

The Bush campaign said Thursday that it had raised \$19 million between July and September. That was more money than the two Democratic contenders, Vice President Al Gore and former Sen. Bill Bradley, raised between them.

Bradley, in fact, outraised Gore for the quarter, \$6.7 million to \$6.5 million. Since the beginning of the year, Gore has outraised Bradley, \$24 million to \$18.4 million.

But Gore also has spent more money. At the end of September, Bradley had more than \$10 million in the bank while Gore had between \$9.5 million and \$10 million.

Bush continues to outpace his

Republican opponents as well. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., was a distant second, raising \$3 million during the last three months and bringing his total to \$9.3 million, which includes \$2 million transferred from his Senate campaign account.

With \$37 million in the bank, Bush not only has enough money to wage energetic campaigns in the early caucus and primary states, but to set up full-scale operations elsewhere, such as in California, New York and the Midwestern states that will be key battlegrounds in the general election.

"Candidates develop full organizations in Iowa, New Hampshire and a few other states," said Anthony Corrado, a professor of government at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

"The rest of the campaign is tarmac to tarmac, where they look for free TV time. The difference is he's going to be able to set up organizations in any of those key states that are essential to the general election."

Accounts by veterans lead to investigation

Query will look into the allegations of the mass killings of civilians during the Korean War.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary William Cohen ordered a top-level investigation Thursday of accounts of mass killings of Korean civilians by U.S. soldiers at No Gun Ri in 1950.

Cohen said a thorough and quick inquiry was needed to maintain "the confidence of the American people" in the military.

Accounts by American veterans and South Korean villagers who said they witnessed killings at the No Gun Ri railroad bridge early in the Korean War — including six ex-GIs who said they shot civilians — were reported by The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Cohen told Army Secretary Louis Caldera to conduct the review, which he said also was important to veterans and to U.S.-South Korean relations.

For years both countries have rejected appeals from survivors and relatives, saying the stories could not be verified.

The AP report prompted South Korean villagers to renew their calls for investigation of the incident in which they said 300 men, women and children were shot to death under the bridge.

"These reports are, of course, very disturbing," Caldera said at a news conference. He said soldiers from the war would be interviewed — acknowledging that no interviews had been conducted in previous Pentagon inquiries into the allegations.

"This review will go beyond the documentary records," he said. "It will be an all-encompassing review" that will take at least a year. He said it was too early to speculate on compensation to the Koreans.

In Seoul, Foreign Ministry spokesman Chang Chul-kyun said officials would "try to verify the truth of all related things concerning this case." He said any further action would be decided after that inquiry.

Caldera said previous Pentagon

reviews, which concluded there was no evidence of mass killing, also would be examined to evaluate military handling of the matter.

Caldera said the early weeks of the conflict were chaotic, and many U.S. soldiers at that time were ill-trained and ill-equipped. He said that was "not an excuse" for the reported acts.

Cohen, in a letter to Caldera, said, "This review is important to the active and retired members of our armed forces, the confidence of the American people in the finest armed forces in the world and our relationship with the people of the Republic of Korea."

Clinton said he was briefed on the AP report Thursday. Asked about it at a White House question-and-answer session, he responded by endorsing the inquiry ordered by Cohen.

"He wants to look into this," Clinton said. "He wants to get to the bottom of it. He wants to examine all the available information and evidence."

Sen. John McCain, a Republican presidential hopeful and former Vietnam prisoner of war, urged a "full and complete investigation."

"The overall record of the American military has been exemplary, far better than any other country," McCain said after a campaign speech in San Diego. "That doesn't change the fact that if there's an allegation, it has to be completely investigated."

A U.S.-Korean War veterans group was critical of the report, calling it "propaganda more than anything else."

"Even if it did happen, I don't think we need to hear this really," said Harley Coon, president of the Korean War Veterans Association. "I can't see where it's going to do anyone any good. It's certainly not going to shed any good light on our military."

But a Korean War historian, the University of Chicago's Bruce Cumings, said the new information is essential to setting the historical record straight.

"Anything that can be done to bring out the truth of the Korean War as Koreans experienced it will serve reconciliation. It will serve to bring Koreans together," Cumings said.

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