

NEWS DIGEST

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Clinton asks for delay of vote

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton asked the Senate in writing on Monday to put off voting on the nuclear test ban treaty, warning that a likely defeat in Tuesday's scheduled vote would "severely harm the national security."

Republicans called his letter a first step toward possibly postponing the vote but sought further assurances the issue wouldn't come up again during this 106th Congress.

"I firmly believe the treaty is in the national interest," Clinton wrote to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., and Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D. But he wrote that he recognized he lacked the two-thirds vote needed for ratification. "Accordingly, I request that you postpone consideration of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on the Senate floor."

By putting his request in writing, Clinton met one demand of his Republican opponents. The letter was silent on their insistence that Clinton promise not to revive it during the 2000

election season, but White House officials rejected that request.

"Even though there are campaigns under way in the United States, we have to take into account the larger national interest," said National Security Council spokesman David Leavy. "It would be irresponsible for the president to limit his tools in dealing with something as sensitive as nuclear testing."

Lott's spokesman, John Czwartacki, said the letter was "merely a first step" and noted that Lott, joined by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., Foreign Relations Committee chairman, has asked for agreement that the treaty not come before the Senate again before 2001.

"Senator Lott will discuss this reversal by the White House with his fellow senators on Tuesday," Czwartacki said. "Now there must be agreement reached in the Senate that it not come up again."

Sen. John Warner, R-Va., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, called the letter "a significant step forward" and was working with Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., to

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DAVID LEAVY
National Security Council spokesman

build support in both parties for postponing the vote until 2001.

A Warner aide said the two senators hoped to have a letter supporting the delay signed by a majority of senators from both parties on the desks of party leaders Tuesday.

"This should be an easy call," Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, the Foreign Relations Committee's ranking Democrat, said in a statement. "The president has asked for a delay. Most Democrats and many Republicans support a delay. It's clearly in our national interest to put off this vote without any further wrangling. I hope the Senate

puts the national interest first."

The treaty would impose a blanket international ban on all nuclear test explosions. Supporters estimate they are 15 to 20 votes short of the two-thirds majority needed for Senate ratification.

The pact has been signed by 154 nations, including the United States, but ratified by only 51. It will not go into effect if the United States fails to ratify it.

Clinton sent the signed treaty to the Republican-led Senate two years ago, but leaders refused to move on it before now. The only hearing on it was held last week by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Program will aid mudslide victims

Low-income families will receive funds and land, says Mexico leader.

TEZIUTLAN, Mexico (AP) — The scope of the death and damage caused by last week's mudslides has shocked Mexico and the world. But where they occurred was no surprise.

A zoning plan drawn up last year called for removing houses built helter-skelter in the ravines of this mountainside city.

There seemed to be no rush. Some of the houses had been in place for decades, and officials lacked the funds or political might to force residents to less perilous locations.

But last week's pounding rains caused huge slabs of hillside to break away, sending avalanches of mud rushing down on houses below.

By Monday, the official death toll stood at 344 across southeastern Mexico, but it was expected to be much higher. Unofficial counts, based on accounts from local officials and witnesses, ran as high as 600.

More than 271,000 were forced from their homes.

On a visit to Teziutlan on

Monday, President Ernesto Zedillo announced a program to rebuild or repair houses destroyed by the disaster. Under the plan, low-income families who lost their homes were to receive land, \$2,000 worth of construction material and 88 days' worth of wages. Those whose houses were damaged were to receive \$200 to \$600 worth of material, while higher-income families were eligible for subsidized credits.

The flooding and mudslides were caused by more than a week of relentless rain, capped by a tropical depression in the Gulf of Mexico. On Monday, forecasters were still predicting strong storms in nine states.

The Tabasco state capital, Villahermosa, was so gravely flooded that its streets became canals.

But the deadliest damage was in Teziutlan, where rain fell for 60 hours without a break — and total precipitation equaled 30 inches.

By Monday, at least 69 bodies had been pulled from the muck at the worst of the mudslides in the La Aurora neighborhood.

A dozen people from the La Gloria neighborhood wandered City Hall on Sunday looking for help. They were forced to flee when huge chunks of earth tumbled onto their neighborhood last week.

Church pays girl's bills to prevent an abortion

LONDON (AP) — Weeks after the British government launched a crusade to cut the number of teen-age pregnancies, the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland has revealed that it is paying the bills of a pregnant 12-year-old to prevent her from having an abortion.

The announcement provoked a furious backlash Monday from abortion rights advocates and renewed the debate about how to curb Britain's teen-age pregnancy rate, the highest in Western Europe.

"We are talking ... of money being offered to a child to keep a baby, which removes choice," said Sarah Colborn, head of the National Abortion Campaign.

"Offering 12-year-olds cash for babies is tantamount to bribery," fumed Sue Carroll, a writer for the tabloid Daily Mirror. "And it stinks to high heaven."

But Monsignor Tom Connelly, a spokesman for the Catholic Church in

Scotland, said the church's offer gives the girl "real choice, so the child in the womb does not suffer at all, irrespective of age or race or creed."

Reports said the unidentified girl, who lives in England and is midway through her pregnancy, was advised by teachers and social workers to terminate the pregnancy because of her age.

Her parents reportedly contacted the Scottish church's Pro-Life Initiative, a program that offers alternatives to abortion and was set up two years ago by Cardinal Thomas Winning, the fiercely conservative leader of Scotland's 750,000 Catholics.

The family was offered immediate financial help if the girl chose to go ahead with the birth.

The church has not said how much it will pay, but it has indicated it will finance such items as a crib and stroller.

The Vatican was unable to say Monday whether other dioceses make similar financial arrangements.

Help offered to rape, AIDS victims in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — AIDS and rape are so common in South Africa that an insurance company is offering a policy to try to protect rape victims from contracting the disease.

The policy, to be introduced today by the CGU Insurance Ltd, provides a

one-month course of anti-retroviral drugs to prevent infection, a year's worth of AIDS tests and counseling.

The new policy arrives as South Africa's two ugliest social problems are dominating the attention of the media and public officials.

The government marked the first year of its anti-AIDS campaign last Friday, as a series of high-profile rapes touched off a wave of protest from women's groups and anti-rape activists.

About 3.6 million South Africans are infected with AIDS, roughly one in eight adults, and the government says 1,500 new infections occur every day.

The predominance of the virus makes rape increasingly lethal. An estimated 64,000 women and girls are raped each year in South Africa.

The insurance policy has drawn a complex response from anti-rape activists and physicians, and even at CGU itself.

"It's playing on the very real fears of women that they might be raped and might get HIV," said Carol Bouwer, head of Rape Crisis Cape Town.

World and Nation Datelines

Washington Elizabeth Dole announces campaign kickoff date

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Elizabeth Dole said Monday that she will formally kick off her campaign on Nov. 7, hoping that date will turn into the anniversary of her election to the White House.

"It's exactly one year before the first presidential election of the new millennium, and our selection of that date reflects my sense that we will make history," Dole said in a release.

The Dole campaign also confirmed on Monday that she will join other Republican presidential candidates in New Hampshire's nationally televised debate Oct. 28 at Dartmouth College.

New Zealand Poor visibility delays Antarctica rescue flight

CHRISTCHURCH (AP) — Poor visibility in Antarctica early Tuesday delayed a U.S. flight to the South Pole to rescue a polar research station's doctor who has a lump in her breast.

Two Air National Guard Hercules LC-130 cargo planes had been due to fly to the coast of Antarctica on Tuesday (Monday CDT), but high winds and swirling snow meant the mercy mission will have to wait until Wednesday (Tuesday CDT) before flying to McMurdo, on the northern coast of Antarctica.

When the planes arrive in McMurdo, they must wait until the temperature at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station rise above minus 58 degrees before flying there to rescue Dr. Jerri Nielsen.

Sweden Scientist, 63, wins Nobel Prize for medicine

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Dr. Guenter Blobel of The Rockefeller University in New York won the Nobel Prize for medicine Monday for protein research that shed new light on diseases including cystic fibrosis and early development of kidney stones.

Blobel, 63, a native of Germany who became a U.S. citizen in the 1980s, was cited for discovering that proteins carry signals that act as ZIP codes, helping them find their correct locations within the cell.

Some hereditary diseases are caused by errors in these signals and the associated transport mechanisms, the Nobel Assembly said in announcing the prize.

Japan Official: After radiation accident, leak continued

TOKYO (AP) — The plant at the center of Japan's worst nuclear accident kept pumping small amounts of radiation into the air for more than a week before officials discovered it, the operator said Monday.

Radioactive iodine 131 at double the legal limit was detected Friday at a ventilator opening in the building, but officials waited until Monday to turn off the exhaust fan and seal the opening.

The ventilator had been left running after the Sept. 30 accident that exposed at least 49 people to radiation, according to JCO Co., which runs the nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Tokaimura, 70 miles northeast of Tokyo.

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