

N.H. next test for candidates

HUDSON, N.H. (AP) — Fresh from victories in the first voting of the 2000 presidential campaign, Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush quickly turned their attention today to the contest in New Hampshire.

Last-place finisher Orrin Hatch decided to quit the GOP race.

"We're not taking a single vote for granted," Gore told noisy supporters at a Manchester rally as the candidates spread over the state.

In the caucuses Monday night, Gore piled up a yawning gap over rival Bill Bradley, and Bush faced stiff competition from second-place finisher Steve Forbes. Utah Sen. Hatch, a conservative who came late to the race, took only 1 percent of the vote in the six-man Republican field and was making plans for his withdrawal announcement, a senior adviser said Tuesday.

A new poll showed John McCain, who skipped the Iowa caucuses, leading Bush in New Hampshire and Gore and Bradley tied in the Democratic race.

"Yesterday was 'Thank you, Iowa.' Today is 'We're ready New Hampshire,'" Bush said early this morning after an overnight flight to Manchester. Later, he told CBS'

"Early Show" that Forbes "deserves credit for a strong second."

"I, however, had a strong first," Bush said.

An exuberant Gore, also on CBS, said Tuesday the competition from Bradley "is great. It's put wind in my sails and made it easier for me to get my keel deeper in the water, so to speak."

On the Republican side, with more than 97 percent of the state's 2,142 precincts reporting, Bush had 41 percent of the vote while Forbes had 30 percent. Conservative Alan Keyes had a solid third-place showing with 14 percent.

"Last night was a triumph of authentic conservative principles," Forbes said Tuesday, predicting a "dramatic three-way race" with Bush and John McCain in New Hampshire. "The Republican establishment has met its match."

But a party leader, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, said Iowa was Forbes' "high water mark. He'll go down, hopefully fast, from there."

Forbes has staked out more conservative positions since his 1996 loss, particularly on abortion, but the McCain camp believes that won't play as well in New Hampshire, where

"Yesterday was, 'Thank you, Iowa.' Today is, 'We're ready, New Hampshire.'"

George W. Bush

Republican presidential candidate

independent voters are a more important factor.

A Quinnipiac College poll, conducted before the caucuses last Tuesday through Sunday, found people likely to vote in the Republican primary favored McCain over Bush 39 percent to 28 percent; Forbes trailed at 9 percent. The margin of error was 4.5 percentage points; 498 voters were surveyed.

The abortion issue came up for McCain again Tuesday. Asked whether he would favor changing the abortion ban in the Republican platform to favor allowing abortion in cases of rape or incest or to save the mother's life, McCain said, "I would support the change."

Arizona Sen. McCain, who has focused on reforming campaign fundraising, also said he felt vindicated by the Supreme Court decision upholding limits on political contributions. "This is what the whole campaign was about, is about," McCain said.

Trailing the top three was Washington activist Gary Bauer at 9 percent. McCain, who skipped Iowa to focus on New Hampshire, pulled 5 percent of the vote.

Among Democrats, with 98 percent of the 2,131 precincts reporting, Gore had piled up a commanding 63-35 lead over Bradley after a tough caucus campaign and was hoping for a bump heading into New Hampshire.

With only 47 Democratic and 25 Republican delegates at stake in Monday's caucuses, the real prize was momentum for New Hampshire primaries Feb. 1.

Gore claimed that momentum, and said his win was sweeter because Bradley had poured millions of dollars and hours of time into the hotly contested state.

The Quinnipiac College poll found Gore and Bradley tied at 44 percent each. The margin of error was 5 percentage points; 371 likely Democratic voters were surveyed.

Clinton: Hijacking rumors lack evidence

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton said Tuesday that there is no evidence Pakistan supported the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane last month.

However, the hijackers may have been linked to a terrorist group that operates in Kashmir — a territory disputed by Pakistan and India — according to the State Department.

The group, known as Harkat ul-Mujahedeen, was placed on the department's list of terrorist organizations in 1997 when it was called Harkat ul-Ansar.

The State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, Michael Sheehan, and other senior administration officials have conveyed their concern to the Pakistani government about possible ties to the hijacking group and also concern about the training of terrorists in Pakistan.

The anxious hijacking incident ended with 155 hostages freed in exchange for the Indian government's

release of three members of the group.

Clinton, responding to a published report that implicated the Pakistani government, said at the White House: "We don't have any evidence that the Pakistani government was involved in that hijacking."

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said, "We have no reason to believe that the government of Pakistan had foreknowledge, supported or helped carry out" the hijacking.

Consequences for Pakistan, had the country been implicated, could have included being placed on the State Department's list of countries that sponsor terrorism. The seven countries on that list are ineligible for virtually all U.S. assistance and for American support in international lending institutions.

Clinton and his senior advisers are weighing a decision whether the president should visit Pakistan in March on a planned trip to India and Bangladesh. Normally, a stop in Pakistan would be

in order diplomatically.

But the military takeover of Pakistan by Gen. Pervez Musharraf last October has prompted an internal debate within the administration.

A decision is expected soon. Because Pakistan has friendly relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan, Musharraf could play a helpful role in U.S. efforts to force the expulsion from Afghanistan of Osama bin Laden, accused by the United States of operating a terrorism network that arranged for the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

Meanwhile, relations between India and Pakistan have soured again, and the familiar concern in Washington is heightened by the fact that both have achieved nuclear weapons capability.

India has accused Pakistan of masterminding the hijacking.

The State Department's Rubin said, "We have been concerned for some time about the fact that agencies of the

"We don't have any evidence that the Pakistani government was involved in that hijacking."

President Bill Clinton

Pakistani government have provided general support to a number of groups operating in Kashmir, including Harkat ul-Mujahedeen." And, he said: "We also have reason to believe that the hijackers were affiliated with the Harkat ul-Mujahedeen."

Lanny Davis, an attorney representing Pakistan in Washington, denounced the Indian government's accusations.

Grandmothers get OK to visit with Cuban boy

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under government orders, the Florida relatives of Elian Gonzalez agreed Tuesday to make the boy available for a meeting with his Cuban grandmothers today at a neutral site, the Justice Department said.

The grandmothers pressed their insistence for the boy's return and pleaded with Congress not to force U.S. citizenship upon him.

"The meeting will take place at the time and site selected by the Immigration Service," Justice spokeswoman Carole Florman said Tuesday.

The agreement culminated a long day of negotiations marked by an order from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to hold the neutral-site meeting, which had been thwarted on Monday by the relatives.

Florman said the government had reassured the relatives that today's session at the Miami Beach home of the president of a Dominican college would be just a visit and would not result in his being taken back to Cuba.

The grandmothers will see Elian

privately, but the boy's Florida relatives will be nearby in the house at the time, Florman said.

Earlier, after meeting lawmakers on Capitol Hill, Mariela Quintana, the child's paternal grandmother, said, "He is only a 6-year-old boy. And he's a Cuban." President Clinton said he would not rule out a veto if Congress passes the citizenship bill.

The INS, part of the Justice Department, ordered the boy's great-uncle, Lazaro Gonzalez, to bring Elian to a meeting with the grandmothers at an "appropriate neutral location" at 3 p.m. CDT today.

The INS specified that location: the Miami Beach home of Barry University President Jeanne O'Laughlin, a sister in the Roman Catholic Dominican order.

The ruling followed Gonzalez's rejection Monday of a meeting anywhere other than his own home.

The meeting "is only a visit" and does not change the boy's status, said the letter signed by Michael A. Pearson, executive associate immigration commissioner for field operations.

World and Nation

Datelines

■ Great Britain

Church considers approving remarriage for divorcees

LONDON (AP) — The Church of England, established by the much-wedded King Henry VIII, took a step Tuesday toward approving remarriage for divorcees — an issue that may be of keen interest to Britain's next king.

Recommendations published by a group of bishops, if adopted by the church's governing General Synod in 2002, could make it easier for Prince Charles to contemplate marriage to his longtime love, Camilla Parker Bowles.

But the church's main concern is dealing with the realities of a nation with one of the highest divorce rates in Europe.

■ Russia

No end in sight for fighting in Grozny

GUDERMES, Russia (AP) — Chechen rebels in Grozny fought ferociously Tuesday to prevent Russian forces from capturing a key square as federal commanders admitted their drive to take the center of the capital still faced strong resistance.

Both Russian and Chechen commanders reported intensified fighting around Minutka Square, where the Russian advance on the city center has been stalled for days. The square is near a key Russian-held bridge across the Sunzha River that bisects Grozny.

■ Great Britain

Human rights activists challenge Pinochet's release

LONDON (AP) — Human rights groups joined Belgium in launching a court challenge Tuesday to prevent Britain's top law enforcement official from releasing former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet on grounds of ill health.

Their challenges contend that Home Secretary Jack Straw must allow an independent examination of the medical evidence he says leaves him inclined to block the 84-year-old Chilean general's extradition to Spain to face charges alleging human rights abuses.

The doctors' reports have not been released for review due to patient confidentiality.

The High Court will hear initial arguments today. A formal hearing, if granted, would likely be held next week.

■ Texas

Prosecutor who prompted investigation of Waco resigns

WACO, Texas (AP) — The federal prosecutor who warned Attorney General Janet Reno of a possible government cover-up after the 1993 Branch Davidian siege resigned Tuesday.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Johnston, whose willingness to re-examine evidence from the deadly standoff touched off a re-investigation of the government's actions, handed in his resignation to his boss, U.S. Attorney James Blagg in San Antonio.

Johnston, 40, acknowledged mounting frustration with Justice officials.

He said his job had been awkward ever since he wrote Reno last August.

Johnston, the chief federal prosecutor in Waco, has been at odds with Justice officials since he paved the way last year for independent filmmakers to review evidence sifted from the charred ruins of the Davidians' compound.

WEATHER	
TODAY	TOMORROW
Partly cloudy, high 26, low 14	Snow, showers, high 25, low 28

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