

All eyes on U.S.: World watches election

■ To some, the results could mean easier access to visas; to others, looser border policies.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In Western Europe, it's the death penalty election. For Chinese newspaper readers, the vote is a lesson in U.S.-style money politics. Kenyans wonder if a new president will make it harder to get U.S. visas.

The world - from Bogota to Brussels, from London to Kuala Lumpur - is watching with increasing interest as the battle between George W. Bush and Al Gore comes down to its final days.

But the race looks a lot different from abroad.

The top issues are clearly in the eye of the beholder, with the focus of coverage varying widely around the globe to reflect the attitudes and concerns of readers and governments.

Take capital punishment: While executions under Texas Gov. Bush have received attention in the U.S. media, the death penalty has mostly taken a back seat because both candidates support it.

Not so in Western European countries that have long banned executions.

"George the Assassin," blared a headline in an Italian newspaper, while Norway's Dagbladet daily maintained in a story Wednesday that Bush had set "a death record" with executions in Texas.

Domestic political and social issues are also driving attention to the election. Europeans wonder what the candidates think about NATO; Mexicans speculate about possible changes in U.S. south-of-the-border policy; many poorer countries watch for signs of tighter immigration.

"Kenyans are very much aware that if there is a radical change in government policy in the U.S., it will be very difficult for them to get visas," said Henry Owour, foreign editor of the Daily Nation in Nairobi.

In Japan, where trade friction with the United States on things as varied as autos and flat glass has long been a top issue, some were looking for signs of increases in U.S. import restrictions.

"With the presidential elec-

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Daily Nation foreign editor in Nairobi, Kenya

tion just around the corner, protectionist moves are increasing rapidly in the United States," said an editorial in the Yomiuri newspaper about the Democratic Party's pledge to promote U.S. industries.

Still, the presidential race has been a hard sell.

There is no single compelling issue, such as the economy in the 1992 contest. Neither candidate has made a major point of foreign policy.

Media watchers have noticed a decline in interest compared to previous elections - and it has shown in the coverage.

To judge by front pages in Britain, there is no U.S. presidential race. Stephen Robinson, foreign editor of The Daily Telegraph, said that to the British eye, the candidates are not very exciting - or different.

"I don't think people in Britain think it matters very much who wins," he said.

Pill threatens human life, Vatican says

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY - A church-state battle has erupted in Italy after the Vatican condemned a "morning-after" pill and urged pharmacists not to sell it.

The pill went on sale this week, listed by the Health Ministry as a "method of emergency contraception." But the Vatican called it a form of chemical abortion and said pharmacists should be conscientious objectors against "new hidden forms of aggression" threatening human life.

By law, pharmacists in Italy must provide customers with all government-approved medicines.

In interviews published in Catholic news media Thursday, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, president of the Italian Bishops Conference, assailed the government's authorization of the pill.

He argued pharmacists should be permitted to take advantage of a clause in Italy's abortion law that allows doctors and nurses to declare themselves conscientious objectors.

Some 500 to 600 of Italy's 64,000 pharmacists are members of the Union of Catholic Pharmacists, according to its president, Piero Uroda.

Italy's health minister, Umberto Veronesi, a prominent cancer specialist, said he was disturbed by the call aimed at pharmacists.

Interviews at several drug stores in downtown Rome suggested they would abide by the law.

"We could be charged. If somebody shows up with a prescription we can't refuse to give out a medicine," pharmacist Giovanni Scarfo said in an interview.

The hormone-based pill Norlevo must be taken within 72 hours of sexual relations. It impedes a possibly fertilized egg from imbedding in the uterus by altering the uterine wall.

It has been on sale in other European countries for some months, leading some Italian commentators to complain about church attempts to influence policy in Italy.

The French government had allowed school nurses to distribute the pill to schoolgirls in a bid to cut unwanted pregnancies, but the practice was later blocked by the constitutional court.

The abortion pill RU-486, which can induce abortions weeks into pregnancy, is not approved for sale in Italy. But the Italian Health Ministry approved the morning-after pill in September, stressing that it was a "method of emergency contraception."



Brian Hender/NewsMakers

An Israeli policeman guards wreckage from a car bomb that exploded Tuesday in a narrow alley in the center of West Jerusalem. The bomb killed two Israelis and wounded eleven.

Car bomb tears apart truce plans

■ The daughter of a right-wing Israeli military leader was one of two killed in the explosion.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM - A thunderous car bomb killed two Israelis near a crowded Jerusalem market on Thursday, escalating tensions as Israeli and Palestinian leaders put off a truce announcement meant to end five weeks of fighting.

Islamic militants claimed responsibility for the blast, which killed the daughter of a right-wing Israeli political leader. Elsewhere, Palestinian areas were again aflame, with two Palestinians killed and at least 80 injured in the West Bank, doctors and rescue workers said.

The violence endangered - and may have scuttled - the latest in a series of cease-fire agreements.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak

and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat initially planned to simultaneously declare a truce at 2 p.m. The announcements were delayed with the expectation they would come a few hours later.

But shortly after 3 p.m., a Mazda car loaded with explosives detonated on a narrow residential street less than 200 yards from the congested Mahane Yehuda market.

Flames leaped high into the air, sending up huge black plumes of black smoke as wailing ambulances converged on the working-class area lined with old stone apartment buildings. Eleven people - including four children - were slightly injured in addition to the two killed.

Police identified the dead as Hanan Levy, 32, and Ayelet Hashahar-Levy, 24. They were not related.

Ayelet Hashahar-Levy was the daughter of Yitzhak Levy, leader of the National Religious Party. Yitzhak Levy has served as a minister in several Israeli

governments. He left his post in Barak's government because of disagreements over the peace process.

His daughter had just moved to Jerusalem and was bringing her belongings to a house in the area at the time of the explosion, police said. One witness said he tried to pull her from the flames.

A group calling itself the military wing of the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. In a statement, the group said the bombing was carried out "in reply to the enemy's crimes against our Palestinian people" and promised more attacks.

Israel said it was standing by the truce reached Wednesday night in a meeting between Arafat and Israeli elder statesman Shimon Peres. The agreement was intended to stop the fighting and open the borders of closed-off Palestinian areas.

However, neither Barak nor Arafat appeared ready to formally announce the truce Thursday night.

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GOP to Democrats: Our work's not done

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - The chambers were deserted and the legislative agenda sparse, but Congress was convening Thursday with House Republicans insisting they would not lay themselves open to Democratic accusations of quitting with the nation's work still undone.

"Some think this Congress is done," House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., said at a morning news conference. "We're not done yet."

The Senate recessed Wednesday after agreeing to return on Nov. 14, a week after the election. But House GOP leaders, at the urging of their members, say they're ready to stay on the job through the election if necessary to work on the spending bills Congress must complete before adjourning.

"We could be here Saturday, we could even be here Sunday," said House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, R-Texas. DeLay's staff circulated a memo Wednesday warning GOP lawmakers that an elec-

tion break was backed by Democrats so they could say that Republicans "want to cut bait and go home without finishing their work."

Democrats scoffed at the idea that anything of significance could be accomplished in the waning days before the election.

On Thursday the only scheduled business in the House was passing another 24-hour spending bill to keep federal programs running and avoid a government shutdown. On Friday, in what could be the last major vote before the election, the House will vote on an Everglades restoration bill that is popular in Florida, a crucial state in the presidential election.

When the Senate comes back after the election for the sixth lame-duck session in the past 30 years, left on the table will be the immigration and workplace safety issues that have held up agreement on the final fiscal year 2001 spending bills and a 10-year \$240 billion tax relief bill that President Clinton has threatened to veto because he objects to the extent of tax breaks for health management organizations.

Bushes nervous for W's big day

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON - Former President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, voted Thursday at an early-voting polling place downtown, but wouldn't say if they voted for their son, GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush.

"It's a secret ballot," Barbara Bush grinned as she placed her paper ballot in a gray steel box emblazoned with a sign that said "Ballot Can."

"I'm miserable," she added. "I don't like this last week. It is much harder when it is your son. When people say he isn't smart ... I just go ballistic."

The former president, wearing an elephant-design tie, said he was confident his son would defeat Democratic Vice President Al Gore, but deflected any talk of his family trying to establish a political dynasty.

"I hate it when people talk about a legacy," he said. "We don't think like that."

He also said he didn't believe the attacks by Democrats painting Texas as a horrible place to live under his son's governorship would stick.

"If there was anything to it, 70 percent of the people wouldn't have voted for him for governor," he said.

He added that his own attacks on Bill Clinton's environmental record while governor of Arkansas didn't work in 1992.

"Remember what happened to me," he said.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

Great Britain

World's oldest woman dies in sleep at age 114

LONDON - The world's oldest woman, who attributed her longevity to whisky and boiled onions, died Thursday - six days short of her 115th birthday.

Eva Morris died peacefully in her sleep at a nursing home in the central England town of Stone, staff said.

"She was a grand old lady," said Lesley Powell, the matron of the home. "She was well right up until last night. She was her normal self. I'd spoken to her about a week ago and told her she was going to be 115. She just said 'Oh, really?'"

Morris was recognized as the oldest woman in the world by the Guinness Book of Records in March.

Great Britain

Researchers: English teens choose cells over smokes

LONDON - British teens are smoking less and talking more on cell phones. A couple of researchers think that may not be a coincidence.

The cell phone seems to compete with cigarettes as teen statements of fashion and rebellion, the scientists suggested in a letter published in the British Medical Journal.

While cigarette smoking among British 15-year-olds has dropped from 30 percent in 1996 to 23 percent in 1999, cell-phone ownership had risen sharply over the same period to about 70 percent today, the scientists noted.

"The mobile phone has a niche in teen-agers' lives that occupies the same place as cigarettes. It meets the same needs," said one of the theory's proponents, Clive Bates, director of Action on Smoking and Health in London. "Many kids can't afford to do both."

Washington, D.C.

Security main issue facing Cole investigators

Retired military officers heading a review of the USS Cole bombing said Thursday they would look for ways to improve the Pentagon's support system for U.S. forces abroad and wouldn't place blame on individuals for failing to avoid the attack in a Yemeni port.

"We are not out here to find fault with anybody," retired Adm. Harold Gehman told a Pentagon news conference.

Gehman said determinations on whether the ship's captain or others in the Navy are guilty will be made by the Navy's own internal investigation, which has been quietly under way since the bombing on Oct. 12.

Washington, D.C.

Nation's economy shows slower pace in third quarter

A key measure of American workers' productivity grew at a healthy though considerably slower pace in the third quarter, while labor costs picked up.

Reports released Thursday showing a key measure of economic activity unchanged in September and disappointing sales by retailers in October added to evidence the nation's economy is slowing to a more sustainable pace, analysts said.

Productivity - the amount of output per hour of work - rose at an annual rate of 3.8 percent during the July-September quarter after a sizzling 6.1 percent rate of growth posted in the second quarter, the Labor Department said.

Weather

TODAY

Mostly sunny
high 60, low 37

TOMORROW

Partly cloudy
high 56, low 39

SUNDAY

Showers
high 49, low 35