

World at a glance

From Associated Press reports

Carter 'surprises' Latins

CARACAS, Venezuela — Jimmy Carter, the most popular U.S. president in Latin America since John F. Kennedy, told Venezuelans Tuesday that Senate approval of his Panama Canal treaties "will be a cause for celebration."

Carter spoke in fluent Spanish during his arrival ceremony, surprising many on his first state visit to America's southern neighbors. He learned Spanish as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, and he made only a few small grammatical errors in his remarks.

It was a welcome gesture in this Spanish-speaking nation. It also avoided repetition of embarrassing translation errors that plagued his visit earlier this year to Poland.

Consumer prices rise again

WASHINGTON — Prices of beef and other foods increased substantially in February, pushing overall consumer prices up 0.6 percent and adding to fears that inflation may be worse than expected in 1978, government figures showed Tuesday.

Severe winter weather was partly to blame for a 1.2 percent increase in food costs, the same as in January, the government said. Grocery prices rose by 1.3 percent, with beef prices up 4.1 percent and pork up 2.6 percent.

Dole won't challenge Ford

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Sen. Bob Dole says the only Republicans he would not challenge for the 1980 GOP presidential nomination if they seek it are former president Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan.

More than names the same

ORLANDO, Fla. — Two men with the same first and middle names allegedly had the same idea of doing the same thing in the same city on the same day and ended up in the same place — jail.

Police say Willie Lee Fisher, 54, of Orlando, and Willie Lee Smith, 42, of St. Petersburg, were both arrested for stealing an umbrella.

The similarity ended there. Fisher pleaded innocent in court Monday. Smith pleaded guilty, was fined \$10 and sentenced to the time he had served in jail.

Judges granted immunity from womens' lawsuits

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court, despite angry disagreement by three members, said Tuesday that judges are virtually immune from lawsuits by women they have ordered to be sterilized — even when such orders are mistakes.

Voting 5-3 in a major decision on judicial immunity, the court said an Indiana judge who approved a mother's request that her unsuspecting teen-aged daughter be sterilized was not subject to damages.

Judges cannot be sued for damages unless they act in "a clear absence of all jurisdiction," the court said in adhering to a judicial immunity doctrine fashioned in an 1871 Supreme Court decision.

Judges' mistakes — even malicious mistakes — are shielded by immunity, that doctrine says, so judges facing difficult decisions remain uninfluenced by fear of personal consequences.

Tuesday's decision reversed a

federal appeals court's ruling that DeKalb County Ind., Circuit Judge Harold D. Stump could be sued for his sterilization order.

The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled that Stump's order was not a judicial act "because of his failure to comply with elementary principles" of constitutional law.

An opinion by Justice Byron R. White said that Stump had the authority to issue the order so any possible misuse of authority is beyond legal challenge.

Justices Potter Stewart, Thurgood Marshall and Lewis F. Powell Jr. dissented, calling Stump's order "lawless conduct."

"I think what Judge Stump did on July 9, 1971, was beyond the pale of anything that could possibly be called a judicial act," Stewart said in opinion for the three.

Taking the rarely used privilege of reading his dissent from the bench, Stewart said, "A judge is not free, like a loose cannon, to inflict indiscriminate damage whenever he announces that he is acting in his judicial capacity."

Linda Kay and Leo Sparkman of Kendallville, Ind., sued in 1975 seeking damages for the tubal ligation performed on Mrs. Sparkman four years previously.

Then Linda Kay Spitzer of Auburn, Ind., Mrs. Sparkman was 15 when her mother decided she had to undergo the operation.

Arafat promises help for UN peacekeepers

BEAUFORT CASTLE, Lebanon (AP) — Guerrilla chief Yasser Arafat said Tuesday that his Palestine Liberation Organization would extend "all our military capacities" to help United Nations peacekeeping troops in southern Lebanon disengage the Palestinians and invading Israeli forces.

But radical guerrillas in the field, under Arafat's nominal but imperfect control, vowed to fight any U.N. attempt to impose a cease-fire in their two-week-old battle with the Israelis inside Lebanon.

And the commander of the U.N. forces — Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Erskine of Ghana — said despite Arafat's offer of cooperation: "Whether they will stop firing or not, I can't tell."

The complexity of the situation was further underlined when a U.N. spokesman in New York, reading a statement from Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, said: "Mr. Arafat informed me, through Gen. Erskine, of his acceptance of my call for a general cease-fire." Waldheim issued his appeal Monday after the Security Council made a similar call March 18.

But Arafat did not say specifically that his guerrillas would observe the cease-fire declared by Israel last Tuesday.

Nonetheless, only scattered shooting incidents were reported Tuesday, after heavy clashes and artillery exchanges during the previous night.

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