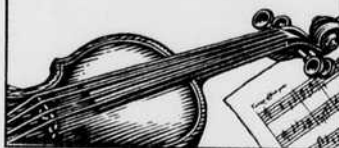


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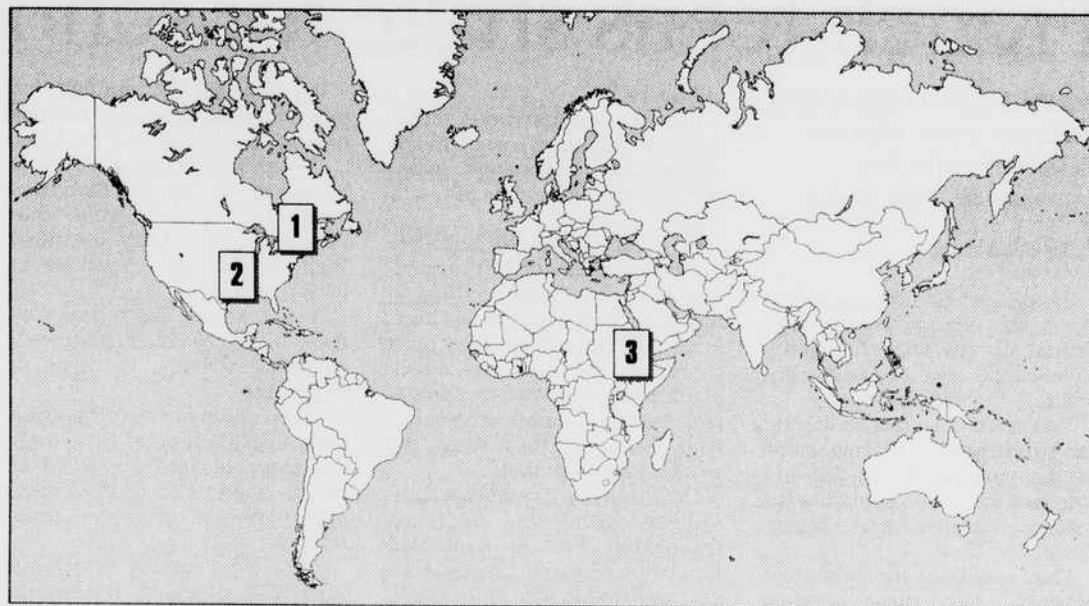
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News digest



Study questions need for AIDS cocktail

1 BOSTON — A man infected with the AIDS virus has volunteered to stop taking the three-drug cocktail that has kept him healthy for 18 months so doctors can see if he can do without it.

Though other AIDS patients have gone off medication and lived with manageable levels of the virus, this is believed to be the first time researchers will monitor such a case.

"There are a lot of anecdotes, but there's been really no systematic study that I'm aware of," said Dr. Clifford Lane, who plans to launch a similar study later this fall at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Nineteen other AIDS patients from around Boston will also participate in the Massachusetts General Hospital study led by Dr. Bruce Walker, including others who will stop taking the AIDS cocktail.

Walker hopes to prove that patients treated early — before the virus kills disease-fighting cells — would be able to stop treatment and live without the side effects, expense and hassle of drug cocktails.

While there is no way to eliminate the virus from the body, drugs have successfully lowered it to undetectable levels in many patients. But the patients suffer a variety of side effects, including dangerously high cholesterol, diabetes, kidney stones and intestinal problems.

"It could give us a better perspective on whether we can think in terms of stopping drugs," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Patients who stop taking medication risk having their conditions worsen, he said. There is also a possibility that the drugs may no longer work if the patient chooses to resume taking them.

Patients who volunteer for such studies are aware of the risks, Fauci said.

Two years ago, a German man stopped taking AIDS medication against his doctors' orders. His virus remains at undetectable levels.

Walker's study could lead to effective yet less aggressive treatment methods in developing countries, which have most of the world's AIDS cases but the fewest resources to fight the disease.

Crime victim advocate found shot to death

2 MONTEREY, Tenn. — State Sen. Tommy Burks, who fought for the rights of crime vic-

tims and never missed a day of work during 28 years in the Legislature, was shot to death on his hog farm Monday.

Police had not determined a motive, but Police Chief Bruce Breedlove said "it absolutely was not a suicide."

The 58-year-old Burks was shot once in the head at nearly point-blank range. A farm worker found the body in the front seat of Burks' truck parked on a road a half-mile from the senator's home, Breedlove said.

"We're running down what we've got, which is very little," he said.

Burks, a Democrat, served four terms in the House before he was elected to the Senate in 1978. His opponent on Nov. 3 was Republican Byron Looper, the Putnam County tax assessor who earlier this year was charged with theft and misusing his office.

Burks was the sponsor of two constitutional ballot questions that will appear on the ballot.

One would strike the word "comfortable" from the section of the constitution that lists requirements for building and maintaining state prisons. The other would add a crime victims' bill of rights to the constitution.

Burks sponsored legislation this year establishing a \$100 reward for people who report and help prosecute litterers. He also helped win a \$1.9 million tax break for farmers by getting them exempt from sales tax on parts and labor for farm equipment repairs.

His bill to allow judges to sentence first-time drunken drivers to public service — picking up trash along highways while wearing an orange vest saying either "I am a drunk driver" or "I am a DUI offender" — was vetoed by Gov. Don Sundquist.

Burks never missed a session at the Legislature. His perfect attendance record was nearly snapped in February when a snowstorm buried Monterey. He used a tractor to pull his vehicle out of a snowbank at the farm and made the 85-mile drive west to Nashville.

Nigerian pipeline blast kills hundreds

3 JESSE, Nigeria — The charred remains of victims still clutched the plastic cups, funnels and cans they intended to use to scoop gasoline from a punctured pipeline before it exploded in this southern Nigerian town.

The bodies were among at least 500 killed when the fuel erupted into a ball of fire over the week-

end, an inferno so intense that flames — some shooting 65 feet in the air — still flared Monday as firefighters let the last of the gasoline burn away.

The burned body of one woman was found with her dead baby still strapped to her back. Many other victims were farmers and villagers sleeping in homes consumed by the blaze that also spread to nearby towns.

Grieving relatives came Monday to Jesse, about 180 miles southeast of Lagos, searching for relatives who ventured to the town drawn by rumors that a huge pool of spilled gasoline was free for the taking.

"It is finished," cried Charity Unurhoro, after finding the horribly burned bodies of her mother and brother. "Now everything is over for me."

Authorities believe the pipeline was punctured intentionally, and that scavengers' tools sparked the explosion Saturday, said an official for Nigeria's state petroleum corporation, speaking on condition of anonymity. Some newspaper reports, however, said a lighted cigarette may have started the blaze.

A mass grave was being dug at the edge of Jesse to bury hundreds of unidentified corpses, many burned beyond recognition. Some bodies remained scattered about town on Monday afternoon, but most were piled together. About 100 people were hospitalized, many of them in serious condition.

Military ruler Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar flew in by helicopter for a 15-minute visit. He said the government would pay for medical treatment, but that there would be no compensation to survivors, apparently because many of those killed were believed to be stealing fuel.

But area residents were furious over the deaths.

"This is a tragedy of huge proportions," the Rev. Andrew Imadu, a local minister, said at one funeral in Jesse. "Our own people have been driven by deprivation to such a desperate search for livelihood."

Southeastern Nigeria, while rich in oil, is scarred by decades of poverty and villagers in some areas are believed to regularly sabotage oil pipelines in order to file claims for compensation.

The above-ground pipeline that caught fire links a refinery in the southeastern city of Warri, 210 miles southeast of Lagos, with the northern city of Kaduna, nearly 380 miles away.

—The Associated Press