

Today	Tuesday	Wednesday
High: 50 Low: 41 Precip: 20%	High: 52 Low: 40 Precip: 20%	High: 53 Low: 45 Precip: 40%

IN BRIEF

Bush pledges to push for immigration reform

SANTIAGO, Chile — President Bush, trying to mend relations with Latin America, pledged Sunday to make a fresh push for stalled immigration reforms and defended the U.S. invasion of Iraq, saying that "history will prove it right."

While the Iraq war is widely opposed in Latin America, Bush said, "The United States of America will stay the course and we will complete the task."

Immigration is a sensitive issue throughout the region and Bush said that his proposed immigration initiative would strengthen border security and help the economy.

"We would much rather have security guards chasing down terrorists or drug runners or drug smugglers than people coming to work," Bush said at a brief news conference. "And so, therefore, I think a guest worker program is important."

Powell begins new Mideast peace mission

JERUSALEM — Secretary of State Colin Powell embarked Sunday on a mission to revive the Middle East peace process after Yasser Arafat's death, saying he will ask Israel to help with the upcoming Palestinian election to pick a successor.

Israel said it would consider pulling back troops from disputed areas in the West Bank.

On his way to the Middle East, Powell told reporters on his plane that U.S.-Palestinian cooperation in setting up the elections "will encourage a degree of cooperation that can spread into other areas."

"This is a moment of opportunity," Powell said. "I'll be encouraging both sides to do everything they can to make sure that this election comes off and that the maximum number of Palestinians get the opportunity to participate."

He said there were "many things" the Israelis could do to help, and he will discuss them during a Monday meeting with Israeli officials.

U.S. enforcement of civil rights laws falls drastically

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Federal enforcement of civil rights laws has dropped sharply since 1999, even though the level of complaints received by the Justice Department has remained relatively constant, according to a study released Sunday.

Criminal charges alleging civil rights violations were brought last year against 84 defendants, down from 159 in 1999, according to Justice Department data analyzed by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University.

In addition, the study found that the number of times the FBI or other federal investigative agency recommended prosecution in civil rights cases has fallen by more than one-third, from more than 3,000 in 1999 to slightly more than 1,900 last year. Federal court data also show the government has sought fewer civil sanctions against civil rights violators.

The study's co-author, David Burnham of TRAC, said the results show that civil rights enforcement dropped across the board during President Bush's first term in office.

The Justice Department had no comment about the TRAC study.

— The Associated Press

China plane crash kills 54 people; cause unknown

A China Eastern Airlines plane's midair explosion kills all aboard, including one on the ground

BY STEPHANIE HOO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BELJING — A passenger plane crashed in an ice-covered lake in northern China seconds after take-off Sunday, killing all 53 people aboard and one person on the ground after an apparent midair explosion, the government said.

There was no immediate word on the cause of the crash, which was the country's deadliest in more than two years and was a setback to China's efforts to improve air safety following a string of accidents in the 1990s.

The China Eastern Airlines plane went down in Baotou, a city in the Inner Mongolia region 330 miles northwest of Beijing, "only about a dozen seconds" after takeoff at 8:20 a.m., the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The plane, a Bombardier CRJ-200, was headed for Shanghai with 47 passengers and six crew members when it crashed into the lake in Nanhai Park, Xinhua said.

Premier Wen Jiabao ordered all-out efforts to determine the crash's cause, state television reported in

its national evening newscast.

All CRJ-200 aircraft in China were grounded, and cabinet-level investigators were dispatched to the crash site from Beijing, Xinhua said.

Witnesses told the agency they heard an explosion before the plane hit the ground, and one described seeing "a big fireball" overhead.

Wang Yongqiang, who lives near the park, said he saw black smoke billowing from the tail of the plane before it crashed and broke into fiery fragments, Xinhua said. He also heard "a big blast" when the plane was still in the air, the agency said.

All aboard were confirmed dead — their remains pulled from the lake by emergency workers who had to break through ice on the lake to get to the wreckage, reports said.

A worker on the ground at Nanhai Park was also killed, Xinhua said.

China suffered numerous deadly plane crashes in the 1990s, prompting the government to tighten safety measures and upgrade airplanes in the completely state-controlled aviation industry.

National elections set for Jan. 30

IRAQ

SYRIA

JOR.

IRAN

KUWAIT

SAUDI ARABIA

Mosul

Ramadi

Fallujah

Baghdad

Hillah

U.S. troops found two more bodies near a site where nine Iraqi soldiers were found Saturday.

Four large explosions shook the area near the U.S. guarded Green Zone.

Hillah: A suicide car bomber failed an attempt to kill police chief, killing himself instead.

Insurgents ambush an Iraqi National Guard patrol, killing eight.

U.S. forces detained more than 1,450 people during the Fallujah offensive.

U.S. troops have found close to 20 "atrocities sites" used by insurgents to imprison and kill hostages.

0 50 mi
0 50 km

SOURCE: ESRI AP

IN BRIEF

Iraq sets date for new election amidst violence

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi authorities set Jan. 30 as the date for the nation's first election since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and pledged that voting would take place throughout the country despite rising violence and calls by Sunni clerics for a boycott.

Farid Ayar, spokesman of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, said voting would push ahead even in areas still wracked by violence, including Fallujah, Mosul and other parts of the volatile Sunni Triangle.

The vote for the 275-member National Assembly is seen as a major step toward building democracy after years of Saddam's tyranny.

But the violence, which has escalated this month with the

U.S.-led offensive against Fallujah, has raised fears that voting will be nearly impossible in insurgency-torn regions, or that Sunni Arabs, angry at the U.S.-Iraqi crackdown, will reject the election.

If either takes place, it could undermine the vote's legitimacy.

Ayar insisted that "no Iraqi province will be excluded because the law considers Iraq as one constituency, and therefore it is not legal to exclude any province."

U.S. and Iraqi troops have been clearing the last of the resistance from Fallujah, the main rebel bastion stormed Nov. 8 in hopes of breaking the back of the insurgency before the election.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said he believed the battle of Fallujah did "serious damage" to the insurgency, adding that "it remains to be seen how severe it was" and whether the guerrillas will be able "to regenerate."

— The Associated Press



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