

Today	Thursday	Friday
		
High: 55 Low: 48 Precip: 50%	High: 52 Low: 38 Precip: 80%	High: 47 Low: 37 Precip: 30%

IN BRIEF

Tight budget has room for special projects

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Despite soaring deficits, the government spending plan awaiting President Bush's signature is chock-full of special items for industries and communities. Consider \$443,000 to develop salmon-fortified baby food, or \$350,000 for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Lawmakers from both parties who approved the \$388 billion package last weekend set aside plenty of money for projects certain to sow good will in their home districts.

Ukrainian president calls for negotiations

KIEV, Ukraine — Outgoing President Leonid Kuchma called for negotiations in Ukraine's spiraling political crisis Tuesday, hours after the leader of the opposition declared himself the winner of a disputed presidential election to the approval of tens of thousands of protesters.

Another top opposition figure accepted Kuchma's proposal even though she had declared earlier on the third day of high tensions that negotiations were unthinkable.

"We now have decided to give the possibility to Kuchma to form pro-

posals for talks," Yuliya Tymoshenko said, according to the Interfax news agency. It was not immediately clear when talks might take place.

The proposal for negotiations between the candidates — Kuchma-supported Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and the Western-leaning reformer Viktor Yushchenko — was out of character for the president, who is not known for compromising. But neither side held a clear advantage, and both had much to lose if violence should break out.

UN implores women to join fight against AIDS

LONDON — The women's rights movement and the AIDS movement must come together if the world is to ultimately win the fight against HIV, the United Nations said in a report released Tuesday.

Women and girls in the developing world are increasingly becoming its main victims, but current safe-sex prevention strategies are of little use to the millions who don't have the power to say no to sex or to insist on condom use.

The inequality women face, from poverty and stunted education to rape and denial of women's inheritance and property rights, is a major obstacle to victory over the virus, according to the latest global HIV status report published by UNAIDS.

The core of HIV prevention is advice to abstain from sex until marriage, be faithful and use condoms.

"The prevention strategies now in place are missing the point when it comes to women and girls," Dr. Kathleen Cravero, deputy chief of UNAIDS said. "We are finding in most regions of the world, they simply do not have the economic and social power or choices, or control over

their lives to put that information into practice."

AIDS prevention strategies need to address the factors that will give women control over their lives, the report said.

"Moving to a situation where every woman gets to keep her house, her land and her furniture when her partner dies is not beyond the realm of possibility," Cravero said. "It doesn't even require turning society on its head. It requires getting the right laws there and making them enforceable for women."

AIDS has to be the catalyst for women's rights in the developing world, UNAIDS chief Dr. Peter Piot said.

"There was reason enough before AIDS, but now the link between the whole gender inequality and death has never been so direct as with AIDS," Piot said. "If AIDS is not enough to shift the agenda for women, then what is enough?"

"It's time now for the women's movement and the AIDS movement to find each other, and that hasn't happened yet," Piot said. "Ultimately, without putting women at the heart of the response to AIDS, I don't think we will be able to control this epidemic."

Dan Rather to step down from 'CBS Evening News'

NEW YORK — Dan Rather, the hard-charging embodiment of CBS News who saw his reputation damaged by an ill-fated report on President Bush's National Guard service, said Tuesday he will step down as "CBS Evening News" anchor in March after nearly a quarter-century in the job.

— The Associated Press

Third large-scale offensive launched in Iraq Tuesday

Guerillas leaving Fallujah led to more car bombings, ambushes and attacks

BY TINI TRAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Some 5,000 U.S. Marines, British troops and Iraqi forces launched a new offensive Tuesday aimed at clearing a swath of insurgent hotbeds across a cluster of dusty, small towns south of Baghdad.

The series of raids and house searches was the third large-scale military operation this month aimed at suppressing Iraq's Sunni Muslim insurgency ahead of crucial elections set for Jan. 30.

The assault aims to stem an increase of violence in an area that has been notorious for months as a danger zone. Car bombings, rocket attacks and ambushes have surged in recent weeks, likely in part due to guerrillas who slipped out of the militant stronghold of Fallujah, according to commanders.

Despite the series of offensives, violence continued unabated. Masked gunmen shot to death a Sunni cleric Tuesday in the second such attack against a member of the influential Association of Muslim Scholars, which has called for a boycott of the national elections.

The cleric, Sheikh Ghalib Ali al-Zuhairi, was killed as he left a mosque after dawn prayers in the town of Muqadadiyah, 60 miles north of Baghdad, police said.

His assassination occurred a day after another prominent Sunni cleric was killed in the northern city of

Offensive launched south of Baghdad

Some 5,000 U.S. Marines, British troops and Iraqi commandos launched raids and arrested suspected insurgents Tuesday in a new offensive aimed at clearing a swath of insurgent hotbeds south of Baghdad.



SOURCE: ESRI

Mosul — Sheikh Faith Mohamed Amin al-Faidhi, who was the brother of the association's spokesman. It was unclear whether the two attacks were related.

Insurgents hit a U.S. convoy with a roadside bomb near the central Iraq city of Samarra, prompting the Americans to open fire, killing an Iraqi, hospital officials said. Mortar rounds aimed at a nearby U.S. military base injured two children.

Also Tuesday, a top aide to radical

Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr accused the government of violating terms of the August agreement that ended an uprising by al-Sadr's followers in Najaf.

Ali Smeisim, al-Sadr's top political adviser, made no explicit threats but his remarks raised the possibility of a new confrontation with al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, which fought heavy battles against the Americans and their Iraqi allies in April and August.



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