

Today High: 53 Low: 30 Precip: 10%	Thursday High: 53 Low: 34 Precip: 10%	Friday High: 55 Low: 35 Precip: 30%
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IN BRIEF

Prime minister candidate promises moderation

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The shy family doctor who became the leading candidate for prime minister Tuesday says ending the nation's rampant violence is his top priority and that U.S. troops would remain as long as they are needed to achieve that goal.

In an exclusive Associated Press interview, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a 58-year-old moderate Shiite Muslim politician who fled a brutal crackdown by Saddam Hussein in 1980, also talked about drafting a constitution that will draw not only on Islam for inspiration.

"Islam should be the official religion of the country and one of the main sources for legislation, along with other sources that do not harm Muslim sensibilities," said al-Jaafari, who currently serves as Iraq's interim vice president and was living in London until Hussein's regime was overthrown.

He said he supports women's rights, including the right to be the president or prime minister, as well as self-determination and individual freedoms for all Iraqis.

U.S. pulls ambassador from Syria on Tuesday

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United States pulled its ambassador from Syria on Tuesday, expressing "profound outrage" over the assassination of a Lebanese leader who had protested Syrian influence in his country.

In Lebanon, noisy street processions mourned former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri a day before the funeral that will bring international leaders to Beirut. Angry Lebanese attacked Syrian workers in Hariri's hometown of Sidon, injuring several and shattering the windows of a Syrian-owned bakery.

Many Lebanese are pressing Syria to withdraw its 15,000 soldiers, who have been in the country for more than a decade.

"We believe the Lebanese people must be free to express their political preferences and choose their own representatives without intimidation or the threat of violence," State Department spokesman

Richard Boucher said in announcing the imminent return of U.S. Ambassador Margaret Scobey.

Appeals court rules against reporters in CIA leak case

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A federal appeals court on Tuesday upheld a ruling against two reporters who could go to jail for refusing to divulge their sources about the leak of an undercover CIA officer's name.

The three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit sided with prosecutors in their attempt to compel Time magazine's Matthew Cooper and The New York Times' Judith Miller to testify before a federal grand jury about their confidential sources.

"We agree with the District Court that there is no First Amendment privilege protecting the information sought," Judge David B. Sentelle said in the ruling, which was unanimous.

Floyd Abrams, the lawyer for both reporters, said he would ask the full appeals court to reverse Tuesday's ruling. "Today's decision strikes a heavy blow against the public's right to be informed about its government," Abrams said in a statement.

Stocks make gains ahead of Greenspan testimony

NEW YORK — Investors cautiously bid stocks higher Tuesday, pleased by growth in retail sales but wary about Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's congressional testimony starting Wednesday. The Dow Jones industrials and Standard & Poor's 500 index reached new 2005 highs.

Wall Street welcomed the Commerce Department's report that overall retail sales fell 0.3 percent in January, less than the 0.5 percent economists expected. Taking sluggish auto sales out of the equation, retail sales rose 0.6 percent, also better than expected.

Some investors, however, remained hesitant prior to Greenspan's take on the economy and monetary policy, coming today and Thursday on Capitol Hill. While most on Wall Street expect Greenspan to reiterate the Fed's current stance, calling for measured interest rate hikes, some analysts believe the markets' recent gains may prompt Greenspan to sound a cautionary note.

The Dow rose 46.19, or 0.43 percent, to 10,837.32, its best close since Dec. 28. The Dow is up 0.5 percent for the year.

— The Associated Press

Venezuelan, Colombian presidents resolve dispute

The two leaders said they will share intelligence to improve security along their common border

BY FABIOLA SANCHEZ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CARACAS, Venezuela — The presidents of Venezuela and Colombia said Tuesday they had resolved a diplomatic dispute caused by the capture of a prominent Colombian rebel in Venezuela and would work together to improve border security by sharing intelligence.

After emerging from a meeting that lasted more than four hours, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said his country would do everything possible to prevent Colombian rebels from seeking refuge in Venezuelan territory.

"We decided to turn the page, to clear things up," Chavez said.

Colombian President Alvaro Uribe said he and Chavez "have a commitment" to increasing security along their common border. "This implies cooperating so sovereignty is not affected," Uribe said.

Chavez said commercial

agreements — including the construction of a gas pipeline connecting the two nations — that had been frozen for weeks would be "reactivated."

Chavez, a fervent nationalist, had claimed the capture of Colombian rebel Rodrigo Granda for a bounty off the streets of Caracas in mid-December violated Venezuela's sovereignty. Uribe had expressed concerns about Colombian guerrillas seeking refuge in Venezuelan territory and said both nations should cooperate in denying them safe haven.

"We are dedicated to fighting terrorism, in any form," Chavez said after the meeting.

Both leaders have expressed concern about the relative ease with which rebels can come across their 1,400-mile border, which runs through mountains and thick jungle.

Chavez and Uribe acknowledged that Cuban President Fidel Castro played a role in lowering tension, and they thanked the leaders of Peru

and Brazil.

Chavez has accused the United States of having a hand in Granda's capture to provoke Venezuela, an accusation the U.S. State Department has denied. U.S. officials, meanwhile, have said Venezuela should investigate whether other Colombian rebels are hiding within its borders.

Sitting next to Uribe at a news conference following their talks, Chavez rejected concerns raised by officials in Washington that 100,000 assault rifles that Venezuela plans to purchase from Russia could fall into the hands of Colombian rebel groups.

"We want to replace arms. Nobody should be worried about that," said Chavez, an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy.

The State Department said Thursday it is "extremely troubled" by Russian arms deliveries to Venezuela, signaling concern that some of the weapons might be turned over to leftist rebels in neighboring Colombia.

"If we were buying from them, they wouldn't be so worried because they love to sell arms," Chavez said of the Americans.

203 killed in China's worst mining disaster in 56 years

BY STEPHANIE HOO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FUXIN, China — Three years after a promised overhaul of China's workplace safety system, an explosion deep in a coal shaft killed 203 miners and left 12 more missing, the government said Tuesday. It was China's worst reported mining disaster since communist rule began in 1949.

Dozens of rescuers worked through the night in freezing temperatures to try to reach the miners who may have been trapped by Monday's blast in the Sunjiawan coal mine in northeastern Liaoning province.

The cause of the gas explosion, which went off about 794 feet below the surface, was under investigation, state media said.

A thick cordon of men in matching dark coats and helmets stood side by side, blocking the entrance to the mine late Tuesday, as cars full of paramilitary police patrolled the site. A line of vans waited to transport any wounded to hospitals in Fuxin, a gritty, soot-covered city

where mining is the main industry.

"Mining is just too dangerous, but it's a struggle to find work here," said Zhang Qiang, a Fuxin native who said he performs odd jobs to make ends meet.

Fuxin, a city of about 1 million people, lies in China's northeastern rust belt, a region that teems with inefficient state-owned industries saddled with outdated equipment. The government has said it would do more to ease unemployment in the region, amid rising discontent.

Twenty-eight injured miners lay in hospital beds Tuesday, suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning, burns and fractures. All were in stable condition, except for one in a coma because of a head injury caused by flying debris, the Xinhua News Agency said.

Some 30 family members of the victims were also hospitalized "due to deep grief," it said. A police van stood outside the hospital.

State television showed Hua Jianwen, a member of China's Cabinet,

watching as rescuers descended into the mine to look for survivors and later standing over the hospital bed of a miner with severe burns on his face.

In October 2002, the government created China's first safety laws and launched a nationwide effort that included workplace inspectors. Despite those efforts, deadly accidents have continued to plague the country's coal mines and factories.

Experts say the new laws have not been matched with adequate education or enforcement, and many blame China's booming economy, and its demand for coal, for tempting mine owners and workers to cut corners when it comes to safety.

"If they can produce more coal, then they make more money," said Tsuyoshi Kawakami, an occupational safety specialist at the International Labor Organization, the United Nations' labor agency. "That is, of course, the underlying cause, because they take less time (for) and pay less attention to safety issues."

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